

**Outmigration from the Hill Region of Uttrakhand  
Magnitude, Challenges and Policy Options**

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# OUTMIGRATION FROM THE HILL REGION OF UTTARAKHAND:

## Magnitude, Challenges and Policy Options <sup>1</sup>

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*The pace of outmigration from the Hill Region of Uttarakhand has accelerated in recent years along with the faster economic growth in the state. This paper attempts to examine various aspects relating to outmigration from the Hill Region of Uttarakhand for enhancing our understanding and argues how migration has almost failed to generate any multiplier effects in the village economy of the region. It depicts the hardships of village life in general and women in particular in the Hill Region of Uttarakhand in the wake of increasing out-migration. It analyses the nature and quality of livelihoods in the hill districts of the State and shows how these are highly backbreaking yet contributing very low incomes to a large majority of workers therein. The paper critically examines the policy paradigm of development and its failures to create remunerative employment opportunities in the Hill Region and resultant out-migration for creating present demographic vacuum in the region. The paper offers measures useful to policy and action to promote employment opportunities and quality of living in the Hill Region of Uttarakhand.*

### I. THE ISSUE

The development experience of Uttarakhand over nearly one and a half decade has been quite encouraging in respect to achieving high economic growth. However, such growth has been mainly centered in three plain districts of the State, and ten hill districts (hereafter referred as the Hill Region) remain far behind in this increasing prosperity of the State (GoUK, 2012, 2014). Most of the economic opportunities tended to concentrate in plain areas of the State, leading to huge income inequalities across the hill and plain districts of the State. Per capita income (measured in terms of per capita net district domestic product) in

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<sup>2</sup>Ten districts with hilly terrain namely, Almora, Bageshwar, Chamoli, Champawat, Nainital, Pithoragarh, Pauri Garhwal, Rudrapur, Tehri Garhwal and Uttarkashi are referred as Hill Region. Another three districts, namely, Dehradun, Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar are in the plain areas of Uttarakhand.

Bageshwar, Champawat, Tehri Garhwal and Almora districts is almost half of that in Dehradun and Haridwar (GoUK, 2013).

Due to this lopsided development, the pace of out-migration could not slow down from the hill districts of the State after its formation. Rather it has accelerated during the recent years. This is reflected in the latest results of Population Census 2011. It shows a very slow growth of population in most of the mountain districts of the State. An absolute decline of 17868 persons in the population of Almora and Pauri Garhwal districts between 2001 and 2011 is a testimony of huge out-migration. Historically, these districts had well developed social indicators in comparison to many other districts of the State. The pace of out-migration is so huge that many of the villages are left with a population in single digit. In brief, the fruits of development reached at much less than desired pace to these districts which could have otherwise created out-migration reducing impact in the form of increased opportunities of economic and social well-being. The alarming de-population of villages in remote and border areas has raised the concern of security of the borders of the country falling along with the hill districts of Uttarakhand. This is in fact, a serious policy challenge that deserves immediate attention.

There are several aspects relating to migration from Uttarakhand that need to be looked at from the viewpoints of enhancing understanding, policy and action. What is the magnitude of out-migration? Are people being pushed by depletion of livelihood resources or are they migrating because they are in a position both in terms of capabilities and opportunities for better avenues elsewhere? What is happening to the linkages between the migrants and their families left behind? Are the migrants contributing to the improvement, not just of the current economic situation of the members left behind, but also, in improving the resource base, both physical and human, at the native place? Which are the regions or pockets more prone to migration? Is location and availability of infrastructure having any impact on reducing out-migration and inducing return migration? Whether development interventions could make any impact on attracting return migration and discouraging out-migration? How to attract return migration to contribute to the local economy? Why migration could not generate multiplier impacts in the local economy? What are the alternative technological options to improve the livelihood options for the people of the region?

Addressing these questions relating to migration and return migration is, thus, an important issue that deserves serious attention at the policy level, particularly in the context of providing feedback to Government of Uttarakhand

(GoUK) for developing its policies and programmes to restrict distress driven out-migration and also formulating its 'brain gain' policy. This paper attempts to answer some of the above questions by largely drawing upon the sample survey specifically undertaken in 18 villages in Pauri Garhwal and Almora districts during the last quarter of the year 2013, and also on an earlier extensive field based work in 100 villages across ten hill districts of Uttarakhand, during the year 2005 by one of the present authors (Mamgain et al. 2005).

The structure of the paper is as follows -it examines the demographic changes in the hill and plain regions of Uttarakhand in Section II. Section III analyses the dynamics of out-migration and its impact on the household (HH) economy. It also argues how migration has almost failed to generate any multiplier effects in the village economy. The section depicts the hardships of village life in general and women in particular in the Hill Region of Uttarakhand in the wake of increasing out-migration. The major underlying causes of out-migration are discussed in Section IV. It analyses the nature and quality of livelihoods in the hill districts of the State and shows how these are highly backbreaking yet contributing very low incomes to a large majority of workers therein. The policy paradigm and its failures to create remunerative employment opportunities in the Hill Region and resultant out-migration for creating present demographic vacuum are discussed in Section V. The Concluding Section offers policy suggestions to promote employment opportunities in the Hill Region of Uttarakhand.

## II. DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN UTTARAKHAND

With a population of 10.09 million in 2011, Uttarakhand is at 20<sup>th</sup> position among Indian states. According to 2011 Population Census, nearly seventy per cent of Uttarakhand population lives in its rural areas. The Hill Region of the State accounts for 48.10 per cent of its population. The State has witnessed significant changes in its demographic structure, particularly during the decade of 2001-11—a period of high economic growth in the State. It has registered a moderate growth in its population (1.74 per cent per annum) during the decade 2001-11, which is 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 the plain districts (2.82 per cent). More so, the rural areas of the Hill Region registered a lowest growth of 0.38 per cent in population during 2001-11 while the population in the urban areas substantially increased there during the period. Thus, much of this growth in population in plain districts of Uttarakhand is contributed by migration from the hill districts. In fact, there has been an absolute decline in population in two districts of Almora and Pauri Garhwal during the period

2001-11 (registering a negative Compound Annual Growth of -0.13 and -0.14 respectively). Other hill districts with very low growth in their population are Tehri Garhwal, Bageshwar, Chamoli, Rudrapur and Pithoragarh. Overall, the share of the Hill Region in the population of Uttarakhand has declined substantially by about five percentage points from nearly 53 per cent in 2001 to about 48 per cent in 2011. While the population in the Hill Region predominantly resides in rural areas, a sizeable 42.4 per cent of population in three plain districts of the State resides in urban areas. In other words, these districts have emerged as predominant centers of economic activities in Uttarakhand. Such a demographic pattern in Uttarakhand is attracting huge out-migration from the hill regions to plain districts of the State and other states.

There has been a significant change in the social composition of population across the Hill and plain regions of the State. Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute over 21.6 per cent of the total population in Uttarakhand. The proportion of SC population has substantially increased in the State during the period 2001-11. The opposite is true in the case of STs. The proportion of SC population is comparatively more in the Hill Region which increased by almost one percentage point over 2001. The opposite is true for STs, whose share in the Hill Region sharply declined during the decade (Table 1). The significant changes in the social composition of the population also indicate a faster out-migration among other social groups (mainly Other caste Hindus) from the hill districts of Uttarakhand to plain.

The sex ratio in the hill areas has been comparatively higher as compared to that in the plain areas of the State (Table 1). Such differences are not revealing in case of child sex ratio and are mainly attributed to high incidence of male out-migration from the hill areas (Mamgain, 2004). It is intriguing to observe a sharp decline in child sex ratio by over 33 points in the Hill Region of the State, while it remained almost the same in the plain districts during 2011. This throws up several questions such as growing passion among the hill population for the male child and easy accessibility to select sex determination tests and female feticides mostly accessible in the medical facilities in the plain areas of the state. This revealing phenomenon requires further in depth inquiry.

With a literacy rate of over 78.8 per cent Uttarakhand is much ahead than the national average. Literacy levels of the population residing in the hill areas are much higher than that in the plain areas of the State, however, such differences have significantly reduced over the decade with a faster improvement in literacy levels in plain districts of the State. Gender-wise, literacy levels of females are lower both in the hill as well as the plain areas of the State.

**Table 1**  
**Select Demographic Features of Uttarakhand and India, 2011**

Sl. No.	Variable	Uttarakhand			India
		Hill areas	Plain areas	Total	
1.	Population (in millions)	48.50	52.36	100.86	1210.86
2.	0-6 year'population (%)	13.18	13.68	13.44	13.60
3.	Population growth rate (2001-2011)	0.70	2.82	1.74	1.64
4.	Sex ratio (all age groups)	1037	900	963	943
5.	Sex ratio (0-6 age group)	894	888	890	919
6.	SC population (%)	20.91	16.78	18.76	16.6
7.	ST population (%)	1.05	4.60	2.89	8.60
8.	% Urban population	17.06	42.43	30.23	31.20
9.	Growth in urban population (2001-2011)	2.43	3.81	3.42	2.80
10.	Literacy Rate (%)	80.87	76.90	78.82	73.00
11.	% Workers (main plus marginal) in total population (WPR)	43.71	33.47	38.39	39.80
12.	WPR-Male	48.32	50.84	49.67	53.30
13.	WPR-Female	39.26	14.16	26.68	25.50

*Source:* Primary Census Abstract, India and Uttarakhand, 2011

We have analysed changes in population in the two districts of Almora and Pauri Garhwal (districts having absolute decline of 8061 and 9807 persons respectively in their population between 2001 and 2011) across different village sizes. It emerges that maximum absolute decline in population has been in smaller villages in both the districts. In bigger villages (having over 125 households) population growth has been rather positive and well above one per cent during the decade 2001-11. The se bigger villages are mainly the rural market places which have grown over the years.

The above demographic features clearly show out-migration becoming a widespread phenomenon in the Hill Region of the State, more so in the recent decade, 2001-11. The magnitude is so huge and widespread that about 375 villages representing 2.75 per cent of total villages in the Hill Region have been almost abandoned in the wake of out-migration. These villages have almost turned into "ghost villages". In Pauri Garhwal district, a highest 122 villages (representing about 4 per cent of the total villages of the district) are left with a population of single digit

in 2011. Though there has been a history of high incidence of migration from the Hill Region, at the same time a large number of migrants tended to return their villages. This process of return migration seems to have stopped now.

### **III. OUT MIGRATION, ITS MAGNITUDE AND IMPACT**

Migration has been a historical process in Uttarakhand. The demography and ethnography of the Hill Region in Uttarakhand has been influenced by a large in-migration from other parts of the mainland during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries and later years (Atkinson, 1822; Walton, 1910). Natives as well as migrants cleared jungles and developed farm land for cultivation through their hard labor over the centuries. With the creation of the Garhwal and Kumaon Army regiments during the British rule, local youth got regular employment on a large number in the region for the first time. This necessitated out-migration of local youth for few years who generally returned to their villages after the end of their service tenure. There had been seasonal migration of males from upper hills to clear the jungles in lower Shivalik hills (Walton, 1910). This initial exposure to outside world had a major influence on building acceptance of livelihood based on migration. The situation has changed substantially in recent decades with a large number of populations out-migrating permanently along with families from the Hill Region of the State mainly to eke out their livelihoods and for a better future of their children. This has become a widespread phenomenon in hill districts, resulting in absolute decrease in population in few districts such as Almora and Pauri Garhwal and very slow growth in other hilly districts during the recent decade.

A number of studies have been undertaken in the recent past to understand the dynamics of out-migration and its impact on local economy (see Bora, 1996; Mamgain, 2004; Awasthi, 2012). For understanding the recent patterns in migration, we have collected information from a pilot survey of 18 sample villages from Pauri Garhwal and Almora districts covering 217 households during the period September-December 2013. Our survey results show as high as 88 per cent of sample rural households reported at least one person migrating for employment from their households (Table 2). Such widespread magnitude of migration has been also reported by earlier studies (see Bora, 1996; Mamgain, et al, 2005; Awasthi, 2012), which of course have been intensified in the recent decade.

In conformity with earlier studies on migration, most of the sample migrants are men, young, educated and belong to Other castes in the hill districts of Uttarakhand. About 86 per cent of migrants are males, a highest 51.4 per cent are in



the age-group of 30-49 years and another 35.5 per cent in the age-group of 15-29 years. The percentage of SCs is proportionately less among migrants. This is mainly due to weak social networks of SCs at the place of destination. However, their proportion has substantially increased in recent years.

**Table 2**  
**Magnitude of Out-migration**

Sl.No.	Duration	Males		Females		Persons	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1.	Short duration migration (2-6 months)	36	11.0	3	4.6	39	10.0
2.	Long duration migration (6-12 months)	251	77.0	35	53.8	286	73.1
3.	Permanent migration (more than 12 months)	39	12.0	27	41.5	66	16.9
4.	Total	326	100.0	65	100.0	391	100.0
5.	Sample population	650	50.2	468	13.9	1118	35.00

Source: Field Survey, 2013

A distinguishing feature of out-migration in Uttarakhand is its being of a predominantly longer duration and that largely to big cities and towns within as well as outside the State. In our sample, about three-fourths of out-migrants are longer duration migrants. Nearly one-tenth of migrants migrate for short duration for 2 to 6 months, which is generally not captured in National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) surveys. This is contrary to the pattern observed in several studies in other parts of the country which report the preponderance of short duration migration among the rural households—mostly of a circular nature (Srivastava, 2011; UNESCO, 2013). This is mainly due to the fact that an overwhelming majority (nearly 74 per cent) of out-migrants of Uttarakhand has salaried jobs which are generally of longer duration. Alone 16 per cent of migrants are employed in government salaried employment and another 12 per cent are

<sup>3</sup>The sample villages were selected purposively from amongst those which witnessed absolute decline in their population during the decade 2001-11 by taking into account the size as well as social composition of the villages. The sample consists of 217 rural households. For our purpose, we have excluded migration related to marriage. Out-migration is defined as those household members who were not living in their villages at least since last three months preceding the date of survey due to their job and/or education.



students. Another 10 per cent are engaged in domestic works, who are largely women migrants. A fairly high percentage of women (nearly 27 per cent) are students. Unlike rural out-migrants from Bihar or eastern Uttar Pradesh, they do not migrate to agriculturally prosperous regions for short-term employment in agriculture (Mamgain, 2004). Their relatively better educational attainments have facilitated them to seek employment in salaried jobs, though necessarily not fetching decent income to most of them.

Migrants have comparatively better educational attainments as compared to their non-migrants counterparts. Nearly half among them have High school/Higher secondary level education and another 36.4 per cent are Graduate and above (Table 3). The inter-social group differences in educational levels are also quite significant with SCs remaining much behind than their Other caste counterparts (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
**Educational Level of Sample Population (7 Years plus) by Type of Household**

Educational level	Type of household		Total
	Migrants	Non-Migrants	
Illiterate	1.3	15.1	10.0
Up to Middle	12.4	45.7	33.4
High School and Higher Secondary	49.9	30.3	37.5
Graduate and above	36.4	8.5	18.8

*Note:* \* Migrant household is defined a household which has at least one person migrated out for job and/or education.

*Source:* Field Survey, 2013

Yet another dimension relates to complete out-migration of households from the village. In our sample villages, as high as 253 households have completely out-migrated in Pauri Garhwal, and another 245 households in Almora district over a period of ten years. These numbers constitute more than half of the number of existing households in the sample villages (Table 4). One can see a number of locked and dilapidated houses and barren parcels of erstwhile cultivated land in several villages in the hill districts of Uttarakhand. As high as half of the Brahmin households have out-migrated completely from their villages in both Garhwal as well as Almora districts. Such a tendency is much less among SC households, mainly due to their poor incomes.

**Table 4**  
**Number of Households who have completely Out-migrated during**  
**Last Ten Years in Sample Villages**

Sl. No.	Social group	Pauri Garhwal		Almora	
		(Number)	As % of existing number of HHs	(Number)	As % of existing number of HHs
1.	SC	28	25.45	34	20.36
2.	Other- Rajput*	65	43.05	113	35.87
3.	Other- Brahmin	189	54.47	98	50.52
4.	Total	253	46.38	245	36.24

*Note:* \* Includes OBC households which are negligible in number. This information is collected from Village Pradhan's records after due cross checking with the Key Informants in the sample villages.

*Source:* Field Survey, 2013

## 1. Migration : Reasons and Processes

Typical “push and pull factors” are necessarily not true for explaining the reasons for migration. Sizeable sections of population who are endowed with relatively better education seek regular salaried jobs outside their villages, which are certainly not available in the Hill Region. One of the important strategies adopted by such risk averting households is to improve the educational levels of their members, mainly males, so that they are able to secure remunerative employment outside the household. This is why nearly one-tenth of migrant workers migrated first for improving their educational levels. Nearly 19 per cent of the workers migrated in anticipation of better economic prospects in the cities. Personal/social contacts also play an important role in promoting such kind of migration. Another 17.4 per cent migrated due to their job transfers and/or because they got other jobs (Table 5). The attraction to cities arising due to hardships of village life in hills such as poor transport connectivity, lack of water, inadequate medical facilities, poor educational facilities and inaccessible markets have further accelerated the process of migration of youth.

Migrants heavily depend on social networks and informal channels to seek information about jobs and to obtain recommendations. These largely include friends and relatives who had already migrated to cities. In many cases village youth travel to the cities where their relatives are living to seek their support in job search. Support is mostly given by family, friends and relatives and it acts like a

**Table 5**  
**Reasons for Migration**

Sl. No.	Reasons for migration	Number	Per cent
1.	Got employment/Job transfers	68	17.39
2.	In search of better employment and income opportunities	73	18.67
3.	Lack of employment opportunities	184	47.06
4.	Education and training	45	11.51
5.	Others	21	5.37
6.	Total	391	100.00

*Source:* Field Survey, 2013

spiral with more and more people being helped in their migration by fellow migrants from the village. The form of support includes financial help, search for job, food, accommodation, etc., at the initial stages of migration. Such social networks and support are relatively weak in the case of SCs, thereby restricting their mobility. FGDs and key interviews clearly reveal that SCs proportionately migrate less due to their low educational levels, lack of awareness, poverty and urban contacts. Migrants belonging to Other castes may help SC migrants from their villages in searching employment but will not help them in sharing shelter and food due to notion of untouch ability and related fear of social stigma back at their village. Newspapers and internet have also important source of information for jobs. In some cases private placement agencies have also helped in getting jobs leading to migration (ICIMOD, 2010).

## **2. Contribution of Migration to Household Income**

A whopping 94 per cent of the sample migrant workers from the Hill Region of Uttarakhand are employed in salaried jobs, though most of them are engaged in low paying petty jobs such as domestic servants, security guards, peons, office attendants, etc. Remittances by them contribute significantly (about 26 per cent) to migrant household's income. These are particularly crucial in poor and relatively low income group households contributing to nearly 50 per cent and 38 per cent of household incomes at the place of origin respectively. If we include the income from pension, which of course is income largely from return migration, the household income rises by nearly 40 per cent (Mamgain, et al. 2005).

The average annual amount of remittance per remitting migrant worker is nearly Rs. 16,000 as per our survey results. Do all migrant workers send remittance back to their villages? Our survey results show that nearly 60 per cent of migrant workers send remittances. Similar observations have also been made in earlier studies (Mamgain, 2004; Awasthi, 2012). These studies show how propensity to remit is comparatively much higher among SCs, middle aged workers and those migrating for shorter durations. The propensity to remit is least among the permanently migrated workers and those with higher level of education. Notably, the tendency to migrate permanently is strong among graduate migrant workers as 39.1 per cent of them are permanently migrated, while this is about 13 per cent among other workers (Mamgain et al., 2005). Studies show that an overwhelming majority of out-migrant workers are employed in low paid salaried jobs, which makes it difficult for them to remit in larger sums. The inflationary pressures in recent years have also seriously eroded their remitting capacities.

### **3. Impact of Migration on Village Economy and Society**

How out-migration has impacted on source areas? The neo-classical economists argue that migration improves the income and standard of living of the source areas through several ways. The remittances received in the source areas generate demand for goods and services in that region which further improves employment and income opportunities. Migrants also bring with them new knowledge and technology which they use in their native place (Lewis, 1954; Fei and Ranis, 1964; Stark, 1991). However, there are mixed experiences of such positive impacts as emerges out from our field observations. In the case of villages in the Hill Region of Uttarakhand, migration has made a tremendous change in the consumption pattern, which is mostly met from outside the region. This has been shifted from consumption of coarse *baranjā* (twelve grains) to wheat and rice like other regions of India. Though people do grow ragi and finger millets but these are mainly used as animal feed. Alcoholism among male youth is widespread and has become a major social concern.

Almost all remittance receiving households (more than 91 per cent) spend remittance amount to meet their daily consumption requirements. More than 60 per cent of such households use remittance money for meeting education and

health related expenses. Only over one-tenth of households use the remittances for paying the labor charges in their agriculture. There are about 5 per cent households who mainly use remittances for the education of their children. None of households use remittances in activities such as non-farm business development. Thus, remittances are hardly able to generate any multiplier effect at the village economy level except opening up of few grocery shops to serve the consumer demand. Moreover, the consumer items sold in grocery shops are mostly procured from outside the Hill Region. Even vegetables and milk and milk produces, which were earlier available within the villages, are being procured from plain areas of the State. Thus, remittances used to finance such consumption are again ploughed back to plain areas, thereby unable to create any multiplier impact in the local village economy.

**Table 6**  
**Use of Remittances**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Use of Remittances</b>	<b>% Households</b>
1.	Basic consumption need	91.8
2.	Education of children	60.1
3.	Health care	64.3
4.	Payments for labor and other costs relating to agriculture	12.2
5.	Repair of house	8.2
6.	Purchase of consumer durables	2.0
7.	Payments of loans	3.1
8.	Purchase of land	2.0

*Source:* Field Survey, 2013

People have abandoned their farmlands in large number, which had been developed by their ancestors with their hard labor over several years. This is a common scene in districts like Pauri Garhwal and Almora. In some villages over half of the erstwhile cultivated land is lying barren. Given the alternative, every able bodied person of the village, particularly young ones, would like to discontinue his/her farming based livelihoods. In several parts of the hill regions, even irrigated parcels of land have been abandoned due to huge out migration. The reasons for such disenchantment include very low productivity of agriculture, increasing menace of wild animals (like monkeys, bores and bears) in destroying crops, and practically no technical know-how and support to diversify agriculture.

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<sup>4</sup>Based on FGDs and Key Informant Interviews

Moreover, it has become increasingly difficult to find labor for ploughing, leading very high charges for such labor in many villages. This has again dissuaded villagers to cultivate their land.

The magnitude of out-migration is so huge that there are several ghost villages left with very few old people (Umar, 2012). In Pauri Garhwal, the identities of many villages are saved by one or two people who still live there (Trivedi, 2012). The names of such villages may be lost to the world soon. The barren fields and ruined houses tell the tale of the sad exodus. The condition of those living back in such villages is pathetic as they face huge social marginalization by their own kith and kins, who hardly visit them. Sometimes it is difficult to manage couple of people for the last rites of a dead person in such villages.

Due to huge migration of educated youth, voices of villagers in local level Gram Panchayats have weakened. Many of such Gram Panchayats are unable to place their demand for the development works and other services before the government developments. Their voices are hardly listened either by politicians or development agencies. The positive development of such migration relates to increasing importance of SCs in political economy of Hill districts with their increasing proportion in population (19.8 per cent in 2001 to 20.9 per cent in 2011). The forms of untouchability no more remain that severe as existed few decades back due to political empowerment of these groups.

With the increasing penetration of market forces coupled with out-migration, social institutions in the villages have become weak. A new class of political leaders, contractors and government officials is growingly defining the new boundaries of “class” in these villages. Most of them have settled their families in relatively better places like Dehradun, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Haldwani and Kashipur in plain areas of the State. However, they dominate in decision making in the village.

Youth power is growingly becoming idle and inactive in the Hill Region due to lack of employment opportunities outside agriculture and associated vocational guidance and training. They are least interested in taking up tedious agricultural work on their fields. In some places their fields are being cultivated by Nepalese for vegetable production to cater the local market. Notably, these Nepalese labour give a nominal amount as rent to the villagers. Local youth are indulged whole day in playing cards as their time pass activity. Added to this is increasing liquor addiction and passive attitude towards life and society. There is a

huge obsession for salaried jobs irrespective of quality and tenure expectations of people have ever risen and want to avoid hard life. This is due to high risk and uncertainty associated with starting self-employed ventures outside agriculture.

Fear of exclusion from mainstream development processes are looming at large among those who have remained behind in their villages. Their major concerns are education of children, old age care, good health facilities, access to quality physical infrastructure and above all, remunerative income opportunities outside agriculture.

#### **4. Impact of Migration on Women's Work**

Remittances could hardly make any dent on reducing the workload of hill women. Every able bodied woman works for average eight to ten hours daily in various productive activities, such as cultivation, fodder collection, fuel collection, animal husbandry apart from cooking of food and care of child and old people in their households. Daily 4 to 5 hours of a hill woman are spent in farm related works, animal tendering, fuel wood collection and fodder collection alone. Next important activity is cooking of food and cleaning of home and utensils which takes about another 2-3 hours daily. In many cases migration has in fact overburdened women as they have to undertake those activities which were being performed earlier by their spouses like working in agriculture and MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) works. Women share over half of the MNREGA employment. The burden of cooking and other domestic chores get reduced for women in joint families where relatively older women take care of cooking and animal tendering activities. Contrary to this, their male counterparts work daily for about four hours during agriculture season, mainly undertaking ploughing, leveling and repair of their fields, and sometimes collection of fuel wood. The gender differences in work load are so sharp that even a school going girl child has to share tasks related to farm, animal husbandry and fuel and fodder collection with her mother more frequently than her brother. Girl children hardly find any time to devote for their studies at home. Many of them would like to pursue higher studies. But their parents are unlikely to support them partly due to weak financial position of households and partly due to passiveness towards girls' education. Such gender discrimination severely affects their studies and future.

In brief, though remittances have ameliorated the economic conditions of women to a certain extent, their work related drudgeries still remain almost

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<sup>5</sup>This emerged prominently during our discussions with villagers of Ujedi, Lwalli, Kanda, Malli and Bagwari.



unchanged. This is due to the fact that remittances are not enough to meet the household requirements. On the other hand, farm related activities still provide some additional economic support to such households for a few months. Thus, women's contribution is very critical in supporting well-being of the household, more so in migrant households in the hill districts of Uttarakhand.

#### IV. UNDERSTANDING DRIVERS OF OUT MIGRATION

There are several causes of migration, the nature of which predominantly depend on the conditions prevailing in a household or a region. Analyzing migration in a typical classical and neo-classical theoretical framework from Uttarakhand's Hill Region or for that matter in developing countries like India, such framework is inadequate to capture the complex interplay of variations in the labour market (both expanding opportunities and failure of the rural labor markets in providing jobs), social and political reasons, the living environment (housing, sanitation and access to basic infrastructure such as education and health) (Jayaraj, 2013). In the context of the Hill Region in Uttarakhand, widespread low earnings in agriculture and limited employment opportunities outside agriculture for increasing population at remunerative incomes have been dominant reasons for migration. Nearly half of the migration was due to lack of employment opportunities in the region. Due to abysmally low levels of agricultural productivity most of the people would like to discontinue farming provided they get some alternate source of income and that too of regular nature. This has been due to uncertainties in hill agriculture associated with climate change, very low irrigated land, scattered farms and rapid spread of wild grass destroying farm land, and growing menace of wild animals destroying crops. Irrigation channels are in bad shape and are hardly being maintained for irrigation purposes. Many of these channels have been washed away during recent years due to frequent heavy rains. The utter failure of hydraulic pump systems for irrigation shows the callousness of government towards infrastructure development for agriculture. One can see such defunct systems in many villages in Pauri Garhwal.

The evidence of abysmally low agricultural productivity is also provided in a recent NSSO 70th Round survey of Agricultural Households (GOI-NSSO, 2014), which shows per household Gross Value of Production to be lower by 3.4 times for households reporting cultivation as a major activity in Uttarakhand (Rs 10752), as compared to similar figure for all-India (Rs 36696). A high preference for regular salaried jobs among migrants and even these being available at

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<sup>6</sup>Discussion with girl students in select High Schools and Intermediate Colleges.

abysmally low salaries at places far away from their homes is an obvious reason for migration. They are thus, not migrating simply in anticipation for higher wages but to minimize uncertainties in incomes back in their villages.

No major efforts have been made to improve the agriculture and its productivity through its diversification in favor of high value crops. In fact, farmers are willing to diversify their farm production to improve their income, but the required support of agricultural extension services, development of irrigation channels, and use of better seeds, improved inputs, technology and marketing remain major concerns.

Like land, the availability of other assets like livestock, farm and non-farm assets is extremely limited. Livestock mainly consists of local breed of milch, draught and other animals like goats and sheep. This is mainly practiced to support the crop production and augment the milk requirements of the households. The number of such animals has drastically reduced over the years. Now rural households tend to retain proportionately lesser number of milch animals to augment their livelihoods. Moreover, the quality of milch animals is poor resulting in very low milk yields. Due to limited land, the shortage of fodder poses a serious problem for most of the households as they have to travel longer distances to collect fodder from reserve forests. This also discourages households from maintaining a large number of milch animals. There is hardly any programme visible which is aimed at providing cheaper fodder through PDS (Public Distribution System), effecting improvement in the breed of milch animals and development of infrastructure for procurement of milk.

Employment opportunities outside agriculture are lacking and are extremely limited. Agriculture is a predominant economic activity engaging over 60 per cent of workers in the Hill Region as cultivators and another 5 per cent as agricultural labor (Table 7). Gender-wise, nearly 40 per cent of male workers and 80 per cent of female workers are working as cultivators in the Hill Region of the State. Contrary to this, the dependence on agriculture is far less in plain areas of the State as about one-third of workers are engaged therein to eke out their livelihoods. Though construction has emerged another major source of employment, youth are hardly interested in such jobs. More so due to lack of skills, local youth are unable to reap the skill intensive employment opportunities in construction sector.

**Table 7**  
**Workers (Main plus Marginal), 2011**

Sl. No.	Region/State	Cultivators	Agricultural Labor	Household industry	Others	Total
1.	Hill	60.7	4.6	2.1	32.6	100
2.	Plain	16.8	17.5	4.0	61.8	100
3.	Uttarakhand	40.8	10.4	3.0	45.8	100
4.	India	24.6	30.0	3.8	41.6	100

Source: Census of India, Primary Census Abstract, 2011

Our sample data also show self-employment as a predominant form of employment accounting for nearly two-thirds of workers, mainly working in agriculture and animal husbandry activities. Another 27.50 per cent of workers are casual wage workers. Thus, opportunities for regular salaried employment are extremely limited in the region (Table 8). Out-migration brings substantial changes in the status of employment of migrant workers. A huge 94.2 per cent of out-migrant workers from Uttarakhand are working in regular salaried jobs.

**Table 8**  
**Status of Employment among Non-migrant Workers (%)**

Sl. No.	Category	Self-employed	Regular salaried	Casual labour	Number of workers
1.	Male	49.3	11.6	39.0	146
2.	Female	77.3	4.3	18.4	185
3.	SC	55.6	2.0	42.4	99
4.	Others	68.9	10.1	21.1	232
5.	Non-poor households	72.7	12.8	14.5	172
6.	Poor households	56.3	1.9	41.8	159
	Total	64.9	7.6	27.5	331

Note: \*Based on type of ration card possessed by a sample household.

Source: Field Survey, 2013

### Low Earnings

Nearly half of the labour input in agricultural sector (employing nearly 70 per cent of the rural workforce) in the hill districts of Uttarakhand could not fetch up even a minimum wage level (Rs 60 during 2004-05!!) (Mamgain et al., 2005). This only indicates a very high incidence of underemployment among those engaged in

these two sectors. Similarly, over half of the person days remained underemployed in animal husbandry. The NSSO 70th Round also reconfirms the very low average monthly income of agricultural households in Uttarakhand (Rs 4701) as compared to neighbouring Himachal Pradesh (Rs 8777) (GoI-NSSO, 2014). Per person day average earnings are comparatively better for those self-employed in non-farm activities (Mamgain et al., 2005). However, such employment opportunities are extremely limited. Thus, transfer incomes are very important sources of household income (Mamgain et al., 2005).

In brief, factors that lead to out-migration significantly are uneconomical land holdings, abysmally low earnings, improved educational levels yet lack of skill training, lack of employment opportunities in and around the villages and rising aspirations of youth. Social pressures to out-migrate such as stigma of being in the village and working in fields, particularly for educated males, are also growingly becoming important (Mamgain, 2004). The obsession of the hill society for regular/secured jobs irrespective of salary and working conditions has been built over the years due to growing vulnerability of rural households to income fluctuations and that too at the cost of back breaking labor which they have to put in farm based activities.

## **V. POLICY INITIATIVES**

Development of hill areas has been a policy priority in the national planning process since long. For the first time, a Special Hill Area Development Programme was initiated in the Sixth Plan period for the development of hill regions in the country and it continued in subsequent plans. The State was accorded a Special Category Status in 2002 by the Planning Commission. It undertook several policy measures and programmes for the development of Uttarakhand. Some of the initiatives by the Government of Uttarakhand are critically examined in the following sections.

The Industrial Policy of the State provided several incentives to attract industries in the form of tax concessions, industrial plots and other basic infrastructure. As a result there has been tremendous progress in industrial development in the State. The number of industries registered under Factories Sector Act increased by over seven times from 698 in 2001-02 to 2843 in 2011-12. Employment in these factories jumped over 8.4 times from 40880 to 342385 during this period (CSO, 2013).

Unfortunately, the industrial development policy of the state remained lopsided in favor of plain areas of the State. Since Industrial Policy of the State

could hardly benefit the hill areas, a separate Hill Industrial Development Policy was announced in 2008 for 10 years to attract industries to hill districts. However, this policy was almost a non-starter till 2011, when Government of Uttarakhand amended its 2008 policy and extended its incentives like upto 90 per cent tax rebate, transport subsidy and rebate on power tariff till 2025. It also decided to set up 11 industrial hubs at district headquarters. With initial hiccups, the policy has started attracting the industries and investment in the State but not on a desired scale. During the period from 2008 to June 2012, an investment of over USD 66.40 Million had come in the State. The policy had also facilitated creation of over 3000 small (mainly micro) units and provided employment for over 10,500 people. MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises) were mainly created in the herbal, floriculture, flour mills, handlooms, mineral water, pharmaceuticals, auto repair and steel fabrication.

The State Government launched the *Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Paryatan Swarozgar Yojana* for promoting tourism related enterprise development. This is a credit-cum-subsidy scheme under which assistance is given for fast food centres, setting up of retail outlets for local handicrafts, transport, motels, hotels, equipment for adventure sports, setting up of tourist information centres with PCs (personal computers), restaurants, etc. However, the potential of tourism and other related activities has yet to be harnessed for creation of employment and income in the hill districts of Uttarakhand. At present most of the tourism is religious in nature, which has also been severely damaged due to the disaster in Kedar valley during June 2013.

For improving employment opportunities in Uttarakhand, both centrally sponsored self and wage employment programmes are implemented in the State. The experience of implementation of wage employment programme, namely, MGNREGA is mixed one. Though employment was provided to almost all demanding households, it could provide about 41 days of employment as against the guarantee of 100 days. Only 7.1 per cent of rural households could avail 100 days employment under the scheme during the year 2013-14. About half of employment generated was performed by women in Hill Region, whereas in the Plain Region, the share was less than 23 per cent. The implementation of MGNREGA in Uttarakhand is being criticized by the villagers due to irregular availability of work and delays in payment of wages. In some cases, works under MGNREGA are also being completed by hiring labor from outside the village.

The experience of *Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana* (SGSY) and its recent format, National Rural Livelihood Mission (also called Aajivika Mission) in creation of self-employment has been mixed one. The implementation of the State Rural Livelihood Mission was started with primary objective of reducing

poverty by enabling the poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong grass root institutions of the poor with the financial support of International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) the Government of Uttarakhand implemented a project called Uttarakhand Livelihoods Improvement Project for the Himalayas (ULIPH) in five hilly districts of Almora, Bageshwar, Chamoli, Tehri and Uttarkashi, covering 959 villages across 17 Development Blocks. The programme was found successful in improving farm productivity, ensuring food security, access to markets and access to credit to rural households. Considering the effectiveness of the previous livelihood programme, IFAD supported another project called Integrated Livelihood Support Project (ILSP) by supporting producer organizations with technology and access to markets to improve food security and livelihoods in 13 Development Blocks. It also supports rural tourism and skill development for remunerative employment. However, such interventions are not widespread and could hardly make major impact on improving income levels of rural households in the Hill Region. Despite comprehensive organizational structures and targeted programmes initiated over the years for agriculture and horticulture development, the position of agriculture and horticulture development in the Hill Region could not improve at the desired levels. In our sample villages, there are hardly any evidences of use of better farming practices in crop production, horticulture, poultry, dairy and fishery production. This is mainly due to lack of agricultural extension services available to villagers to improve their farm practices and productivity. Hardly any upscaling efforts are being made to improve farming practices and small enterprise development to a large part of Hill Region.

## **VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND POLICY ISSUES**

The overall growth path of Uttarakhand has been impressive since its separation from Uttar Pradesh. However, this growth has created huge regional inequalities within the State. The growth process could hardly create productive employment and income opportunities in the Hill region of Uttarakhand. There is hardly any visible progress made towards developing remunerative agriculture in most of the villages in the Hill Region. As outside agriculture, employment opportunities in construction grew significantly, but local people are mostly unwilling to undertake manual work. Their access to skilled jobs in construction sector was severely affected due to lack of such skill training. Although the employment opportunities in other sectors such as trade, transport and government services improved in the Hill Region, they remained limited to a few people. Thus, lack of remunerative livelihoods coupled with obsession for



salaried jobs has forced a large number of youth to migrate to cities in search of salaried jobs which are of relatively longer duration irrespective of earnings. The situation has become quite grim in some pockets as there are hardly any people left in single digit in a number of villages. Such destitution needs to be reversed.

The policy framework for the all-round development of the Hill Region of Uttarakhand is comprehensive and appreciable. However, the New Industrial Policy of the State, which has almost remained ineffective in attracting investment to the hill areas of the State, needs to be re-looked and made more effective to ensure balanced industrial growth by attracting more capital to backward districts, particularly in the hill areas. Thus, the real policy challenge is to create environment friendly micro and small enterprises in the Hill Region. The persistent bias in credit flow for priority sectors is yet another example where the banking sector prefers to finance only developed districts and is hesitant to take risks in the hilly districts. In this process, the gap in development is bound to widen. As a result there is hardly any visible progress made towards developing remunerative employment opportunities in farm as well as non-farm sectors in most of the villages in the Hill Region.

Our field experience in rural areas and discussions with various line departments of the State government indicates that there is a big gap between the productive employment needs of rural households and the efforts that are being made by the government towards this end. The huge potential of horticulture and tourism needs to be developed on a wider scale in the Hill Region. Agriculture extension services need to be strengthened to improve their outreach and effectiveness. Various forms of tourism as outlined in the Tourism Policy of the State need to be developed in letter and spirit in a given time frame. This will create large number of employment opportunities for local youth and arrest their distress driven migration. Similarly, given the relatively higher educational levels of the Hill population, expansion of communication network, better electricity and comparatively cheap land, there is a good scope for developing knowledge based IT services in the Hill districts.

Towards harnessing the potential of employment opportunities, skill development of both men and women is crucial for various trades and occupations. Most of the people including migrants of the Hill Region though are better educated but lack skill training. This severely affects their employability and earnings. This would require their training in a larger proportion in different vocations. The skill training measures need to be generic as well as area specific depending on the choices and opportunities for such skills.

With the growing emphasis on protection of environment in the context of climate change, role of the Hill and mountain Regions is being seen very critical



towards this endeavor. In this direction, Eco Task Force could be created on the lines of Territorial Army by recruiting local people, whose services can be used in forestation and their maintenance. This will not only help in improving the environment but also provide salaried employment to local youth.

There are encouraging examples of promoting sustainable livelihoods, linking these to value chains and improving quality of life of rural areas in the hill districts, being undertaken by various government agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs. A study by International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD, 2013), demonstrates tremendous opportunities for income generating activities both in farm as well non-farm sector through value chain development of high-value products and services in the hill regions. In this entire process, the role of local communities is of paramount importance for upstream interventions. Equally important are improved access to information, skills, technology, markets, policy and institutional support leading to better terms of engagement for small producers (p.32). In sum, the programmatic interventions must support the higher growth initiatives in the Hill Region of Uttarakhand which have yet to witness a remarkable improvement in employment and income opportunities for their population. These efforts also need to percolate to poor and marginalised sections of the society such as SCs and religious minorities. The development dreams of people of Uttarakhand, as they visualized at the time of demand for a new State, particularly those residing in hill districts must be addressed on a priority basis. In fact, there is need for a strong political will to initiate a process of niche based development strategy for the hill areas of the State with a strong support of bureaucracy.

The non-resident Uttarakhandis (NRUs) can play a major role towards promoting the overall development of the State. They can be role-models for resident Uttarakhandis in their specialized fields. There is a need to promote region-wise *melas* (fairs) relating to development issues concerning people in various fields such as education, skill training, career counseling, health care, governance, right to information, development debate, networking, promoting cultural heritage, technology knowledge, etc. In fact, they can act as "Watch Pole" on government policies and programmes through their apex umbrella organization. NRUs can help in developing and strengthening several voluntary organizations, in the State, related to their respective fields of knowledge and expertise. In fact, they can adopt certain villages and initiate a development process therein. NRUs can also support the poor children of Uttarakhand in their studies by establishing some fellowships.

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