GENDERED MIGRATION PATTERNS AND EFFECTS IN THE INDIAN BENGAL DELTA

Out of 1315 households in the delta, 18% have sent migrants to

Domestic destinations 96%  International destinations 4%

There are different patterns for male & female migration

Men migrate mostly for economic reasons whereas women migrate for social reasons

MALE
Lack of employment opportunities and unsustainability of agriculture at home

FEMALE
To join spouse, marriage and moving with family members

More men are migrating than women

MALE 83%
FEMALE 17%

Most migrants are young

MALE & FEMALE 21-30 years

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The majority of migration is economic, but social and environmental reasons also play a role.

**Economic Reasons 64%**
Unsustainability of agriculture and lack of other economic opportunities.

**Social Reasons 28%**
Family obligations, aspirations for better education, marriage.

**Environmental Reasons 7%**
Cyclones and flooding can act as stressors.

Seasonal migration is most common.

Seasonal migration occurs once or twice a year and the migrants come back to the delta at the time of rice cultivation.

- **Seasonal 57%**
  moves once or twice a year based on seasons

- **Permanent 24%**
  moves with intention to stay for at least six months

- **Circular 19%**
  moves more than thrice a year irrespective of seasons

Most migrants move to areas in and around Kolkata, the nearest metropolitan city.

51% West Bengal
10% Maharashtra
9% Tamil Nadu
7% Kerala
6% Gujarat

Migrants moving to West Bengal, mainly in Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA), exhibit permanent, circular and seasonal natures of migration.

Migrants moving to the other states of India mostly exhibit seasonal migration.
Migrants’ experiences in areas around Kolkata

Better employment opportunities

- Transport
- Hotel
- Construction
- Domestic help
- Caregiver
- Household industry

Aspirations have been fulfilled

- 86% moved permanently
- 98% reunited with their families
- 82% moved permanently
- 82% gained skills

Happier in current place

CURRENT PLACE
- Men 93%
- Women 89%

PLACE OF ORIGIN
- Men 33%
- Women 25%

Highly satisfied with food security and access to services

- Food security
  - Men 95%
  - Women 97%
- Access to services
  - Men 94%
  - Women 98%

But, gender differences exist in the fulfillment of aspiration

- More women are being reunited with family
  - Men 25%
  - Women 98%
- More men are gaining skills
  - Men 82%
  - Women 50%
- More women are making sufficient money
  - Men 38%
  - Women 66%
All migrants, but particularly women, find it difficult to assimilate into their new environments

Most are not part of social groups, associations or cooperatives  
♂ 92%  ♀ 97%

More women felt that local people were unwelcoming towards them  
♀ 4%  ♂ 13%

People will continue to move in the future

23% of non-migrant households intend to migrate for better economic opportunities

16% of migrants intend to go back to their place of origin for family obligations

Policies should address the issues around migration

Given the role of economic insecurity in driving migration, adaptation policies should seek to reduce the vulnerability and improve the wellbeing of people in sending areas. Priorities for this include –

Promote agricultural adaptation to reduce livelihood stresses which promote migration

Alternative livelihood options to enhance resilience and adaptive capacity of the households

Policies are also required to ensure safe and secure conditions for migrants in receiving areas as migration is likely to continue. Priorities for this include –

Skill development opportunities, particularly for women to improve the likelihood of decent work opportunities

Social groups, associations or cooperatives to include migrants to improve their place attachment besides making them feel welcome

Planned service provision to account for increasing urban growth through migration (and population increase).

Data is based on emerging results from extensive household surveys conducted in migrant sending (n=1315) and individual migrant surveys conducted in migrant receiving areas (n=512) of the Indian Bengal Delta. This work has been done under DEItas, vulnerability & Climate Change: Migration & Adaptation (DECCMA) project within the Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAA) program, a joint initiative of the UK’s Department for International Development and Canada’s International Development Research Centre. For more information, visit www.deccma.com