

Male Circular Migration, Rural-Urban and Gender Dynamics, and Food Security in India

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Migration & Food Security (MiFOOD)

Paper No. 28

Series Editors: Sujata Ramachandran and Jonathan Crush

Abstract

This paper examines the ways in which male circular migration as a household livelihood strategy affects food access among rural households in India. Circular male labor migration is the dominant form of labor mobility in many parts of India. This migration pattern creates important rural-urban linkages through income transfers and alters the gender power relations within the migrant-sending households. Drawing on empirical research in Siwan district in the eastern state of Bihar, this paper analyzes the influence of these dynamics of migration on household food security, with the larger objective of bridging the divide that currently exists between migration and food security agendas in global development research and practice.

Keywords

migration, food security, rural-urban linkages, remittances, gender, India

Suggested Citation

Choithani, C. (2024). Male Circular Migration, Rural-Urban and Gender Dynamics, and Food Security in India. MiFOOD Paper No. 28, Waterloo.

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Cover Image

Women engaged in farmwork in rural India. Credit: Chetan Choithani



MiFOOD Network
GLOBAL MIGRATION & FOOD SECURITY

This is the 28th Working Paper in the MiFOOD Working Paper series published by the Hungry Cities Partnership, an international network of cities and organizations that focuses on building sustainable cities and urban food systems in the Global South. The seven-year collaborative MiFOOD project is funded by a Partnership Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

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Published by the Hungry Cities Partnership at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Introduction

This paper offers research on the relationship between rural-urban migration and food security. Its focus is on the role that domestic rural-urban labor migration plays in influencing food security among poor rural communities in India. More specifically, the paper looks at how male circular migration as a household livelihood strategy affects food access among rural households in India. Circular male labor migration is a dominant form of work-related mobility in large parts of India (Tumbe, 2012, 2018). This migration pattern creates critical rural-urban linkages through income transfers and alters the gender power relations within migrant-sending households. This paper analyzes the bearing of these migration dynamics on household food security in India.

Rural-urban linkages are becoming increasingly important to understand development and change in many developing countries (Tacoli, 1998; Tacoli & Agergaard, 2017). Structural economic change and agrarian decline have resulted in a growing number of rural households transitioning their dependency from farm-based livelihoods to nonfarm, migration-dependent jobs in cities and towns (Bryceson, 2002; Choithani et al., 2021; Pritchard et al., 2014; Rigg, 2006). However, this rural economic change does not involve a linear, permanent shift from rural-farm to urban-nonfarm modes of life and work. Structural transformation has weakened agriculture's role as a source of income and employment. At the same time, the alternative jobs in urban areas are characterized by informality and precarity, which while allowing the rural households to make up for the agrarian decline, constrain opportunities for a large majority of rural households to build secure urban futures. As a result, labor mobility is characterized by circular moves, with migrants earning in cities while remaining firmly embedded in their origin villages (Bremner, 1996, 2010; Potts, 2010).

This circular migration pattern involves complex interactions between the rural and urban settings. Migration is pursued as a joint household strategy whereby young adults, usually men, move out to cities for non-agriculture incomes, while the rest of the family remains in the village to tend to family agriculture and maintain the rural base. This dispersion of members across sectors and locales enables these households to optimize their livelihood security and goals. Migrants receive support from their households in their journeys and stays to navigate uncertain urban destinations, and migration incomes help rural households to preserve and strengthen rural assets (Bigsten, 1996; Stark, 1991; Tawodzera, 2010). These rural-urban linkages created by male circular migration increasingly define household wellbeing outcomes. This paper assesses the implications of these processes on food security aspect of household wellbeing, which remains a hugely neglected issue in the academic and policy discussions on migration and development (Crush, 2013; Ramachandran & Crush, 2023).

The empirical focus of this paper is on India, which offers a context of global relevance to assess the migration-food security relationship. India accounts for the highest burden

of global food insecurity and undernourishment (FAO et al., 2023). It also witnesses some of the largest flows of internal rural-urban labor mobility globally (Government of India, 2017; Tumbe, 2018). Despite this, there is a paucity of rigorous research on the migration-food security connections. Drawing on primary field research in eastern India, this paper examines migration-food security dynamics in India, with the larger objective of bridging the divide that currently exists between migration and food security agendas in global development research and practice (Choithani, 2022).¹

Importance of Indian Context for Migration–Food Security Relationship

According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), India has the highest number of food-insecure people in the world. The most recent available statistics show that during 2020-22, there were an estimated 234 million people in the country who faced basic calorie deprivation, representing over one-third of the severely undernourished people in the world (FAO et al., 2023). By comparison, the prevalence of undernourishment in over 45 Sub-Saharan countries combined included 252 million people - only marginally higher than India (FAO et al., 2023, 163–68). The problem of food insecurity often starts at birth, evident in the unrelentingly high levels of child undernutrition across India. Anthropometric data from different rounds of the National Family Health Survey since the early 1990s reveal slow progress on child undernutrition. The most recent survey conducted between 2019 and 2021 showed that one-third of the country's children aged under five years were stunted (35.5 percent) and underweight (32.1 percent) (IIPS & ICF 2022, 390).

The high food insecurity and undernutrition in India persist despite adequate food availability to meet the food needs of the country's population; in fact, India is a net food exporter of many food grains such as wheat and rice (Government of India, 2022). Moreover, India has witnessed rapid economic growth following economic reforms since the early 1990s. But this growth has not made a significant dent in the country's undernourishment prevalence – a departure from the experience of many developing nations, leading the country to be characterized as a puzzle in the global food security discourse (Haddad et al., 2003; Pritchard et al., 2014). Although there are many dimensions to this riddle, one key reason why India's growth has been especially ineffective in improving food and nutrition is that its benefits have accrued to a small section of educated urban dwellers, while a large majority of rural poor are left out (Choithani, 2021). India's recent economic growth has been highly urban-centric, concentrated in a few large cities, while nearly 70 percent of the country's population lives in rural areas where hunger and food insecurity are disproportionately concentrated. These rural-urban dynamics are at the heart of India's food security challenge.

Rural households have traditionally relied on agriculture to meet their income and food needs. However, this is no longer the case, and the farm sector is witnessing growing stress.

The share of the agriculture sector in India's national income has almost halved – from 33 percent in 1990 to 17 percent in 2022 (Mehrotra et al., 2013; World Bank, 2024). Added to this is the fragmentation of already small landholdings over time, as high demographic pressures have coalesced with intergenerational inheritance norms, with parents dividing their fixed quantity of land among their children. In 2015-16, over 85 percent of all operational landholdings were less than 2 hectares (Ministry of Agriculture, 2019). The diminished significance of agriculture has resulted in a massive employment shift out of farming. Two recent studies show that the job losses in agriculture ranged between 40 to 68 million workers between 2004 and 2019 (Choithani et al., 2021; Pattayat & Parida, 2024). From the perspective of food security, these changes have resulted in a disconnect between agriculture and food security in India (Gillespie & Kadiyala, 2012).

The dwindling circumstances of farming and urban-centric economic growth have increased the significance of rural-urban migration. Indeed, this migration stream is fast replacing the rural-rural migration that previously characterized labor mobility in the country (National Sample Survey, 2010). There are an estimated 100 million migrants in India, constituting 20 percent of the country's total labor force, and recent evidence point to a significant rise in work-related mobility (Choithani et al., 2021; Deshingkar & Akter, 2009; Government of India, 2017; Nayyar & Kim, 2018). Labor migration involving low-skilled rural workers – who constitute a bulk of migrants – largely comprises circular moves with migrants working in the cities but remaining connected with their villages of origin. Recent research also shows that migrants now spend extended durations away from villages, and seasonal agriculture-linked migration is being replaced with "permanent circular labor migration", indicating greater reliance among rural households on migratory incomes (Choithani et al., 2021, 5). Another feature of this migration is that it is essentially a male pursuit. This male-dominated migration is prevalent in regions covering over 200 million people (Tumbe, 2012, 2018). These patterns of migration involving circular rural-urban migration and male-dominated mobility provide pathways of linkages between migration and food security. However, there is inadequate understanding of, and much less research on, how these mobility patterns relate to household food security in India. Existing research on the migration-food security relationship shows food insecurity as a driver of household migration decisions (Maharatna, 2014; Moose et al., 2002). But it is not known how migration, in turn, affects household food security outcomes. The rising significance of migration in rural lives and livelihoods and the weakening role of agriculture as a source of income and food security necessitates exploring other ways in which migration potentially affects household food security outcomes. Using a case study approach involving primary fieldwork with rural households in a district of Bihar in eastern India, this paper seeks to highlight how circular mobility and male migration relate to food security.

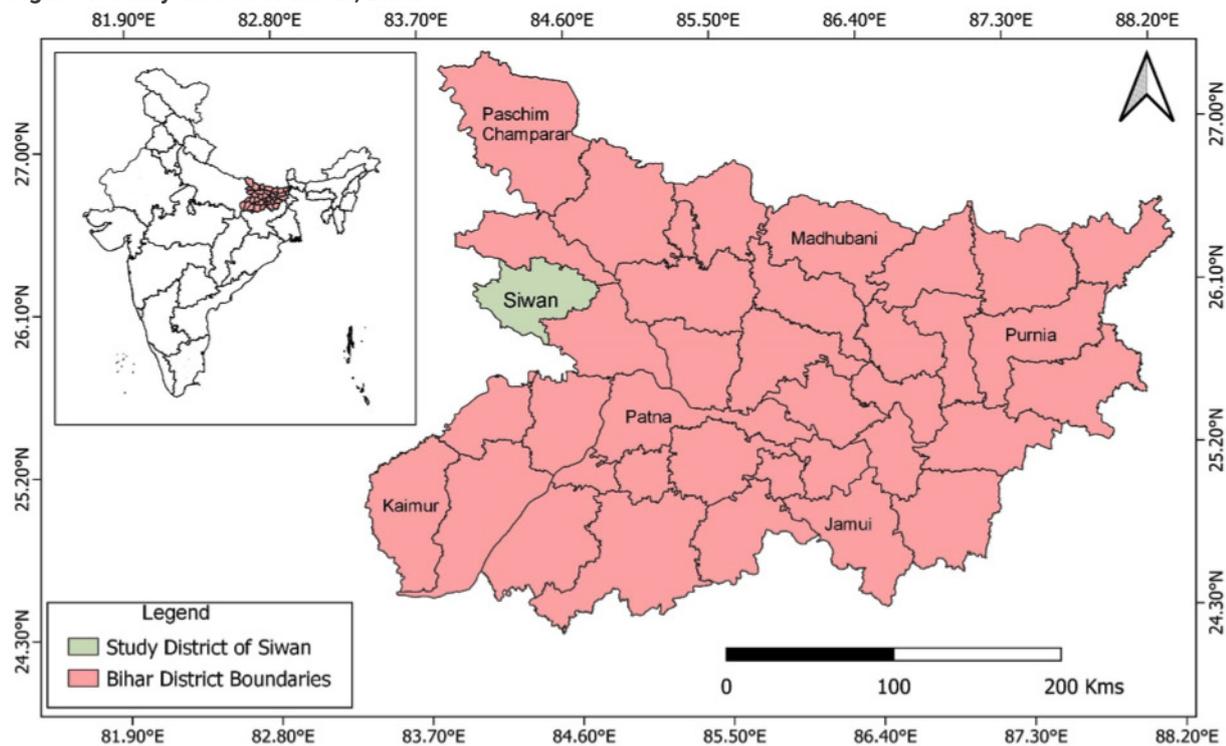
Study Site, Data and Methods

The research for this paper involved primary fieldwork in the district of Siwan, located in the eastern Indian state of Bihar (Figure 1). A land-locked province in the north Indian plain, Bihar is the third-most populous Indian state, with over 100 million residents, nearly 90 percent of which live in rural areas (Census of India, 2011a). It is also among the most impoverished states of India, with a large section of the population facing acute deprivation on many counts. In 2015-16, over half of Bihar's population suffered from multidimensional poverty – the highest in India. The food and nutrition situation in the state is dismal. Poor nutrition is also why the state tops the multidimensional poverty chart (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2018). High poverty and a weak local economy push a large majority of the state's population to migrate for work to other parts of India. Circular male migration dominates work mobility, while the women stay behind in the village due to socio-cultural restrictions on their mobility to distant places.

Within Bihar, Siwan has witnessed very high male rural out-migration dating back over a century (O'Malley, 2007). This high rate of male outmigration in this area is a critical reason which informed its selection for this study. The urbanization in Siwan is even lower than the state's average, and about 95 percent of the district's 3.14 million people reside in rural areas. Population density is about 1,500 people per square km – among the highest in the country for a predominantly rural district (Census of India, 2011b). Agriculture is an essential source of local livelihoods. But high population densities mean that landholdings are exceptionally small and support livelihoods only in combination with other income streams, which usually involve long-distance migration. Much of the migration from the district is within the country, although international migration to countries in the Persian Gulf is significant and growing (Choithani et al., 2021). The focus of this study was on domestic or internal labor migration.

The primary fieldwork was carried out in 10 villages spread across Siwan using quantitative and qualitative methods involving participant observations, surveys and interviews. The principal research method was the household surveys conducted with a representative sample of 392 rural households, almost equally divided between 197 migrant and 195 non-migrant households. Migrant households included those that had at least one member who had spent two months or more outside the village for work in the year preceding the survey. Those without such members were treated as non-migrant households. As part of the surveys with migrant households, 144 women married to male migrants were additionally surveyed. Most households had one migrant, but there were also households with two and three male members working outside the village. Before the household surveys, a house-listing exercise was performed in all villages to enumerate households based on their migration status, which was used to draw the study sample.

Figure 1: Study district of Siwan, Bihar



Source: Own work based on spatial data from the Survey of India.

Additionally, interviews were conducted with key informants, such as members of village councils and government officials in charge of development works, as well as with a smaller sample of surveyed households and women respondents. While the fieldwork focused on the rural end, 10 migrants belonging to surveyed households were also interviewed in cities (destination places) to understand rural-urban linkages. This fieldwork was done during 2012-13 in three phases: house-listing in January-February 2012, surveys and interviews in April-June 2012 (some key informants were interviewed during house-listing), and a village revisit for more qualitative interviews with households and women respondents in September-October 2013.

Field Insights on Migration–Food Security Nexus

Given the generally high level of underdevelopment in the fieldwork district of Siwan, poverty and food insecurity provided necessary prompts for surveyed households' decisions to migrate. This relationship was, however, not unidirectional, and migration also affected household food security outcomes. As with Bihar (and large parts of India), two migration patterns stood out from the survey data. The first aspect is circular mobility with most migrants returning to their villages and maintaining close relations with family at the origin. But migration involved extended time away from natal villages, with over 70% of migrant households (139 households) reported having migrant members who spent 10+ months in the past year away from the village for work, signaling the importance of work-mobility. The second aspect is that it exclusively involved male migration. There were 280 migrants belonging to 197 households, and all were men. Almost all migration was to the urban centers, with two-thirds of total migrants (161) working in seven

large cities, including Bengaluru, Delhi and Mumbai. These migration forms provided two key channels through which migration-food security effects unraveled including rural-urban linkages created by migrants' remittances, and changes in household gender relations due to male migration.

Remittances, rural-urban linkages and food security

It is important to reiterate that sub-economical landholdings restricted the productive capacity of agriculture to provide adequate sources of income. Moreover, not all households owned land, and some depended on wage labor or self-employment for their livelihoods. Of the 392 surveyed households, two-thirds (67.8%) owned farmland, with only 10% (40 households) having landholdings of one acre or more, which too is small for agriculture to act as a principal or sole source of income. In other words, most of the surveyed households were either landless or "functionally landless" (Pramanik et al., 2014, 2), resulting in their heavy reliance on non-agriculture income sources. Survey data shows that three-quarters of the incomes of non-migrant households came from non-agriculture sources in and around the village. Remittances earned in distant, mainly urban, locations accounted for a similar share of migrant households' income. Migrant households reported higher incomes than non-migrant households because jobs in cities were paid better than wages in rural areas. Even though most migrants worked in the precarity-laden urban informal sector performing occupations such as construction workers, drivers, and petty business owners and incurred greater living expenses in cities compared to their permanent village bases, these urban remittances made a difference to rural lives. Indeed, for migrant households, the share of income from remittances alone was higher than the total income of the non-migrant households (Table 1).

Income source	Migrant households	Non-migrant households
Farm*	4.5	17.6
Nonfarm	92.8	76.2
Rural incomes	17.4	76.2
Migrants' remittances	75.4	0.0
Others	2.7	6.1
Household average annual income (rupees)	60,232	43,507
Total number of households**	197	194

* This includes income from livestock and agriculture labor.
 ** One non-migrant household did not report income.

A well-established body of research demonstrates that because migration requires economic (and social) resources to support the initial costs of the move (travel, accommodation, etc.), it is generally the better-off and not the poorest who migrate. This follows that there are pre-existing income differentials between the migrant and non-migrant households, with the former already being in advantageous position, though generally higher incomes at destinations exacerbate these inequalities between the movers and stayers (Connell et al., 1976; Lipton, 1980; Stark, 1991). Field research in rural Siwan, however, showed that the income differentials between migrants and non-migrant households reflected post-migration outcomes manifested through remittances. Data from household surveys revealed that migration was widespread across socio-economic groups. The generally high incidence of poverty meant that resource constraints applied in virtually the same manner to all households, and some impoverished households did borrow money to finance the initial costs. Moreover, the long history and circularity of migration meant that the networks were well established and information on work destinations flowed regularly. Most non-migrant households stayed not because of migration costs, which were not too high for domestic migration in any case, but often because of non-economic reasons (e.g. social obligation to care for elderly parents). The economic circumstances of non-migrant households were weaker than the migrant households whose access to remittances placed them in a relatively better position vis-à-vis their counterparts. Rural nonfarm incomes of non-migrant households also depended on migrants' urban remittances that fueled consumption locally (Van Duijne et al., 2023).

From the perspective of food security, remittance receipts affected migrant households' access to food in two ways. First, they provided migrant households with the cash resources to source their food needs from the market. Indeed, food consumption was the topmost use of remittances among remittance-receiving households. 192 of the 197 migrant households reported receiving remittances from their migrant members, and almost all (188 households) used remittances for food. This was followed by expendi-

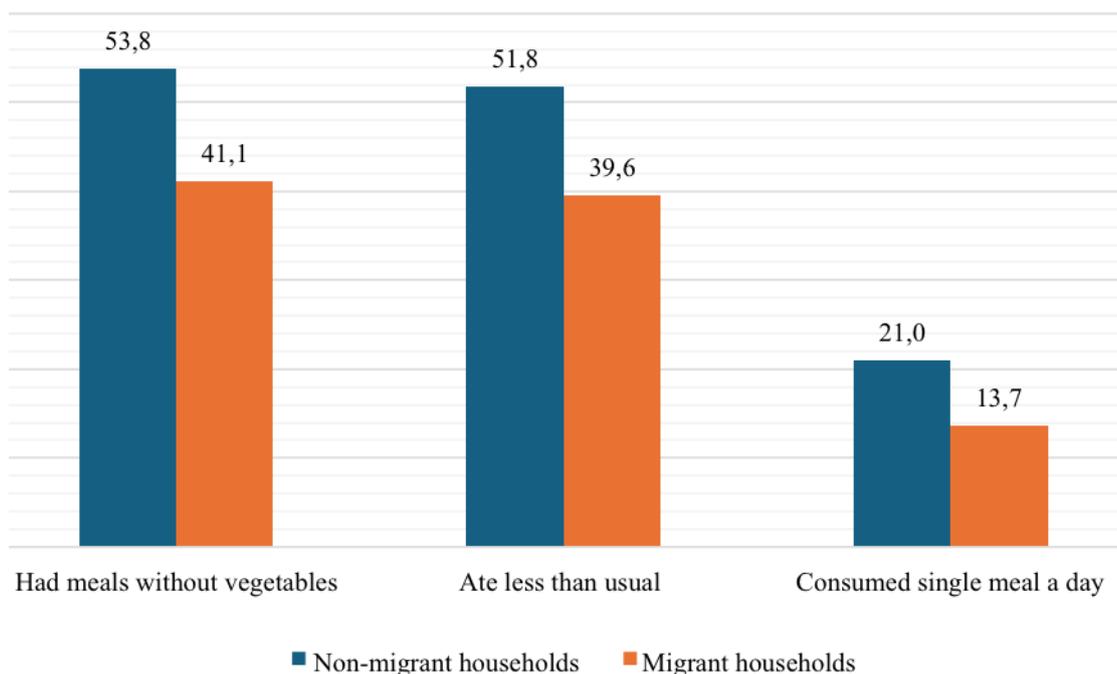
ture on other livelihood needs, including healthcare (162 households), and children's education (133 households). My field observations and interviews revealed that for very poor migrant households, remittances averted the risk of hunger.

Second, remittances enabled investments in land and agriculture. They allowed land-poor migrant households to cover the costs of farm inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, and avoid distress-selling of their family's farmland, which was the key migration motivation for some households. In a few cases where remittances were significantly higher, such as households with three or more migrant members, these households were able to buy more land and increase their landholding. These findings show that the interactions between rural-farm and urban-nonfarm livelihoods were two-sided. Thus, while land poverty pushed rural households to migrate, remittances were invested in agriculture.

The extent to which these processes affected and reflected on household food security outcomes varied from one household to another. Simply put, by increasing the purchasing power and providing the cash for investment in land and agriculture, migration and remittances positively impacted household food security. The survey asked households a set of questions on whether they had experienced food insecurity in the year prior to the survey. Figure 2 compares households with and without access to remittance incomes on some food security indicators. The data shows that while the overall food situation among the surveyed households was grim, remittance-receiving migrant households reported better food access than the non-remittance households without migrants. A greater proportion of households without remittances reported 'having meals without vegetables', 'eating less than usual' and 'consuming single meal a day'. Similarly, survey data on dietary diversity showed that although most surveyed households lacked the requisite diversity, households receiving remittances fared better than those who did not. Remittance incomes provided migrant households a marked advantage over their non-migrant counterparts.

Gender and food security

Figure 2: Food security and remittances (percentage of households)



Gender provides another pathway to understand the linkages between migration and food security. Many studies have shown that women tend to utilize household resources in a way that maximizes household welfare (UNICEF, 2007). Despite facing widespread discrimination, women place household well-being over their personal welfare, although gendered socio-cultural expectations guide this behavior. For rural India, some analysts have even argued that:

If a typical Indian rural woman was asked about her personal 'welfare', she would find the question unintelligible, and if she is able to reply, she may answer the question in terms of her reading of the welfare of her family. The idea of personal welfare may itself be unviable in such a context (Das & Nicholas, 1981 cited in Sen 1987, 6–7).

In patriarchal societies, such as the case study site of Siwan, it is the men who control household finances and assets such as land. However, male migration can alter these gendered power dynamics of households, with women becoming more central actors in family decision-making. Indeed, my field research in the village sites in Siwan showed that in the absence of men, women performed the role of de facto, if not de jure, household heads, hence tempering the dominant gender ideology that places men in command of household affairs. The survey data showed that more than half of the 197 migrant households (102 households) were headed by women, whereas only seven percent of non-migrant households were women-headed

Male migration created a space for women to assume more significant roles in the day-to-day functioning of their households. Women married to migrants reported enhanced self-respect and decision-making power due to the migration of their husbands (Table 2). In particular, more

women living in nuclear families reported improved autonomy than those living in joint or extended families where other male members, such as father-in-law, stepped in for their absentee son(s). Survey data showed that in migrant households, more women took independent decisions on matters relating to child health and education, daily household purchases and general money management. This autonomy was, however, not absolute, and many decisions, particularly related to household finances, continued to involve men. The interviews with women revealed that many phoned their husbands and made decisions only after their approval. Yet, women increasingly set household priorities and were sometimes willing to go against their husbands' wishes. To take one example, in an interview with a 35-year-old woman from the backward Bhagat (Kushwaha) caste with a son and a daughter, she repeatedly stated that even though she managed the household, she followed the wishes of her migrant husband. She called him regularly for advice on various matters and would not take any decision without his approval. When asked if she would be okay if her husband decided to remove their children from school, she replied: "If my husband asks me not to send our kids to the school, I will go against his wish and still educate them". She also placed equal importance on educating her daughter.

I feel education of girls is very important. Today, there is no difference between girls and boys. In fact, girls are far ahead of boys in many fields. They have proved that they are second to none. And society is also slowly changing its attitude towards women. Today, more women are working than before. I do not know if my daughter would want to be a housewife like her mother, but I will educate her enough so that she has options.

The migrant participants in this study also acknowledged

their wives' increasing roles in running the rural end of their household while they were away working in urban areas. Male migrants' exposure to cities also changed their perceptions of rigid gender norms in the village. But it did not alter the dominant gender ideologies. Thus, while male outmigration did not lead to absolute freedom for the women left behind, it did enhance their decision-making roles within the household, supporting gender-balanced development outcomes to some extent.

However, this increased female autonomy was accompanied by added responsibilities. With male migrants spending a large part of the year in cities, many women performed a wider set of tasks in the household's reproductive and productive spheres. In addition to the domestic work and care duties tied to the gender division of labor, women were also responsible for the family farms. In nuclear households with no male adults, women increasingly performed all tasks involved in family farming –from sowing crops to harvesting them. In some cases, when women did not receive remittances from their husbands due to their precarious informal jobs, they also worked on others' farms for cash and in-kind incomes and performed non-farm work for wages. Many women complained of feeling exhausted and rued their husbands' migration. Prolonged separation from their husbands also negatively affected their mental wellbeing. The absence of men also required women's increased engagement with state institutions to access social protection schemes such as subsidized food rations. This new form of engagement created its own challenges for women as men

dominated these institutions. Thus, male outmigration also increased the multiple demands on women and adversely affected their mental wellbeing (Table 3).

As regards the question of the how these altered gender relations relate to household food security, this migration-gender-food security nexus was not straightforward and numerous intervening variables, such as household income, women's receipt of remittances, and family structure mediated food security outcomes. But the overall story that emerged was that while women-headed migrant households often prioritized food security, this did not result in their improved food situation. To illustrate this rather contradictory outcome, as noted earlier, women in nuclear households enjoyed greater autonomy in the day-to-day household affairs compared to the joint or extended families. The survey data on food expenditure showed that the average monthly per capita expenditure on food among women-headed nuclear households was Rs. 388. This figure was about 20% higher than that for men and women-headed joint households (Rs. 330) and 25% more than male-headed nuclear households (Rs. 309). Yet, a large segment of women-headed nuclear households reported higher food insecurity compared to the women-headed joint households (Figure 3). The comparison of women-headed households with male-headed households by family structure reveals similar patterns. These findings perhaps suggest the gender-based disadvantages faced by women-headed nuclear households. This pattern is corroborated by qualitative data. Resources in joint families were shared which meant that it protected these households

Table 2: Women respondents who reported their husbands' migration improved aspects of their own and their family lives

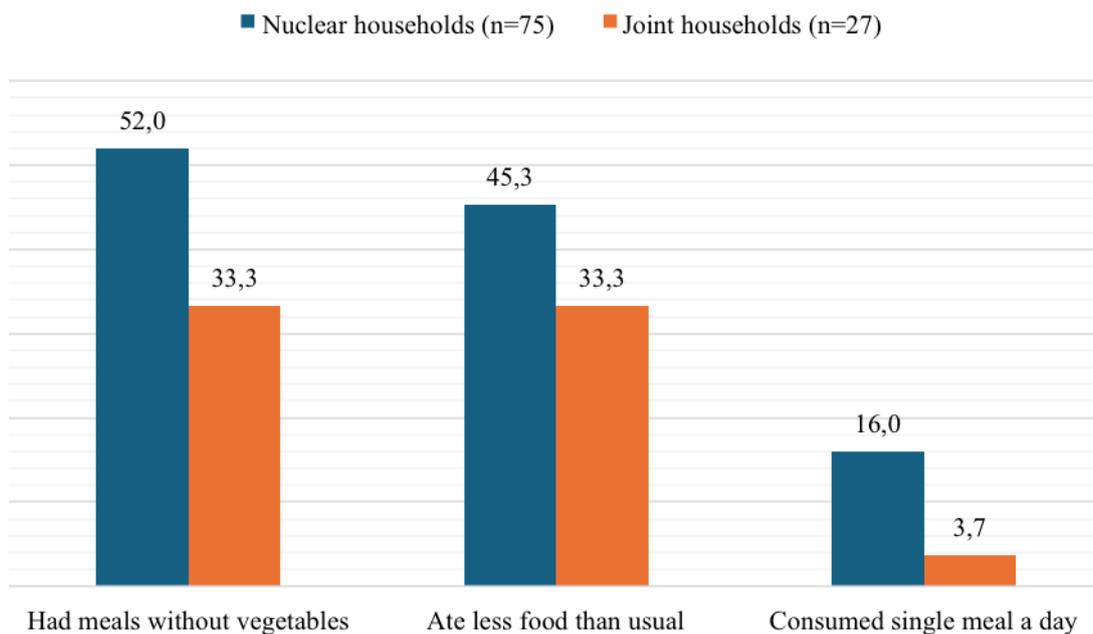
	Number	Percentage
Women and children's health	108	75.0
Children's education	97	67.4
Women's self-respect	93	64.6
Women's decision-making power	103	71.5
Family relations	86	59.7
Total number of women (n)	144	100.0

Table 3: Key challenges reported by women following their husbands' migration*

	Number	Percentage
Have lack of peace of mind	123	85.4
Feel more responsibility	121	84.0
Feel lonely or isolated	116	80.6
Unable to visit parents or relatives due to lack of time	108	75.0
Have insufficient time for rest	100	69.4
Feel tired	100	69.4
Have insufficient time for recreational activities	95	66.0
Unable to sleep properly	70	48.6
Number of women (n)	144	100.0

*Women respondents' answers to these questions were recorded using four options that included i) always, ii) often, iii) sometimes, and iv) never, to assess the extent to which women faced these issues. The data in this table refers to women who responded in the affirmative. Also, three of the 144 women respondents chose not to answer these questions.

Figure 3: Food security status of women-headed migrant households by family type (percentage of households)



from food and income shocks, particularly when their male migrant members were unable to send remittances. Also, food insecurity among the women-headed households did not always stem from inadequate resources. It was also the “time poverty” which caused women to skip meals often or eat irregularly (Nichols 2016).

Conclusions

Despite the increased significance of migration and food security in global development research and policy agendas, their shared connections and linkages still need to be fully understood. As Ramachandran & Crush (2023, 342) have recently observed, “a glaring disconnect [exists] between deliberations on the governance of migration and development, on the one hand, and the governance of food security, on the other”. This disconnect arises from biases inherent in the dominant discourses on these two topics. The discussions on migration tend to focus largely on international migration and remittances, and what these processes mean for the economic growth and financial development of developing countries (Ratha et al., 2023). The conversations on food security, on the other hand, have centered mostly on improving land and agricultural productivity, paying less attention to questions of livelihoods and food access (Pritchard et al., 2014). Through the analysis of domestic rural-urban male circular labor mobility in India, this paper highlights how migration influences rural households’ food security. The paper shows that male circular migration affects food access through the two pathways of remittances and gender, and the paper uses primary fieldwork with rural households in Siwan, Bihar to unpack the interactions of these channels with food security.

The analysis reveals two key insights related to these pathways. First, circular migration created crucial rural-urban linkages through income transfers, and migrants’ remittances played an important positive role in improving food

security at the village origin. While the high poverty in Siwan meant that the overall food security situation was bleak, households with access to remittances reported better food access than those without these resources. Remittances facilitated food access by improving households’ cash position to source food and enabling investments in family land and agriculture. These findings call for a nuanced understanding of remittance landscapes and their facilitating roles in enabling households to meet their basic livelihood goals such as food security. This vital issue has been largely sidelined in the grand discussions on the remittances-development nexus.

Second, gendered relationships mediated household food security outcomes in important ways. Male outmigration allowed women to assume more active and independent roles in managing their household affairs and assets. However, this increased autonomy was concomitant with an intensified workload. Women performed an increased share of tasks in the household’s productive and reproductive spheres in the absence of men. Despite the enhanced independence of women, the findings of the study on the migration-gender-food security relationship were somewhat contradictory. Although female-headed households prioritized food security and devoted the greater share of their household budgets to food purchases, they fared worse than the male-headed households in terms of food access. This key finding indicates the persistence of gender-based disadvantages for women-headed households. The increased work burden and time poverty appeared to erode the positive effects of improved autonomy on food security. However, this dimension of migration-gender-food security relationship needs more detailed scrutiny.

The insights presented in this paper have wider significance beyond the research setting in eastern India. In many countries of Asia and Africa, the nature of structural economic change has fostered complex and dynamic interactions

between rural and urban areas through non-permanent forms of labor mobility and remittance corridors. Urban-centric economic growth has increased the socioeconomic returns from rural-urban mobility, but the costs of migration have remained high (Selod & Shilpi, 2021; Tacoli & Agergaard, 2017). Consequently, rural households are adopting the common strategy to spread out across rural-urban, farm-nonfarm sectors to optimize their livelihood security. The food security of rural households is increasingly contingent on these rural-urban linkages created by circular mobility, and these dynamics deserve much more attention in the analysis of food security than they have received thus far.

Endnote

- 1 This migration-food security relationship is discussed in detail in Choithani's (2022) book *Migration, Food Security Development: Insights from Rural India*.

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