

Ghost Villages in Uttarakhand : A challenge to sustainable development

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ABSTRACT

Indian economy comprises of world largest population and almost 70% of them lives in rural area. It is very important to uplift the standard of living of the people living in rural areas and this issues is crucial in the sense as it effects the economic growth directly. Though there are various challenges in such areas including poverty, low levels of income and higher illiteracy rate leading to increase in the unemployment ratio further leading to poor health conditions. To overcome these challenges particularly in developing economies, United Nations in 2015 introduced SDGs with 193 countries as their members with a view to ensure overall development of all the sectors in the participating countries by 2030. To achieve the objectives defined, 17 goals were unanimously adopted with an aim on 169 targets, right from zero hunger, peaceful living and protecting environment with various other defined aims, with a participatory approach with a view that no one is left behind.

India being an active member took various proactive steps at national and state level with setting up of ambitious goals for every sector to ensure the integration of SDGs, with focus on defined objectives and taking into consideration the various stakeholders. This paper studies the challenges faced by Uttarakhand state in India, particularly dealing with Migration within and outside the state, which poses a big challenge to achieve the sustainable development in the state at grass root level, in spite of being ranked 19th in 2015, surged to 9th rank in 2019 and further to 3rd rank in 2022, as reflected in its ascent on the SDG Index Ranking, published by Niti Ayog, Government of India.

This research has been done to understand and highlight the grass root problem of extensive migration particularly in hilly areas having Ghost villages in particular and to identify the various reasons for the problem and to sort out the issue with the ethical implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility and to benefit all the stakeholders. Our study is based on collection and critical assessment both the data ie. Primary and secondary data.

Survey was conducted to collect the primary data, while secondary data have been collected from various report of the government for a period from 2021-2022. Data have been analysed through simple statistical techniques and graphical presentations . Based on the findings , few recommendations have been made to resolve the problem of migration .

INTRODUCTION

Happiness is a main motive of human life. Man always wants to be in a state of Happiness irrespective of challenges and obstacles faced by him through out his life. Whether it's a single individual or a particular community or society of a nation. The main motive of each and every life into existence aims to achieve fulfilment. This might seem to be a philosophical thought but it is also true in social and economic perspective.

To overcome these challenges particularly in developing economies, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations. To achieve the objectives defined, 17 goals were unanimously adopted with an aim on 169 targets, right from zero hunger, peaceful living and protecting environment with various other defined aims, with a participatory approach with a view that no one is left behind. India being an active member took various proactive steps at national and state level with setting up of ambitious goals for every sector to ensure the integration of SDGs, with focus on defined objectives and taking into consideration the various stakeholders.

The main motive of this research is to understand and highlight the relationship between sustainable development and the problem of migration in state of Uttarakhand and how this extensive migration will impact the goals set up under SDGs for Uttarakhand State, particularly for hilly region. In this research the researcher has identified the various factors responsible for the forced migration of the rural population in Uttarakhand state leading to abandoned houses and villages named "**Ghost Villages**" and has critically analyses the factors responsible for that. The researcher has also given the probable economic solutions to over the problems and the future avenues of further study with special reference to the role of private sector investment through the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Model.

MEANING OF SUSTAINABILITY

Economically, every individual or society wants to satisfy their wants with the help of limited available resources. The ever increasing rise in wants and desires, always keep the resources into scarcity. This, it becomes the responsibility of every individual or society or country to make optimum utilization of its available man made and natural resources, both for the satisfaction of the present generation and moving ahead to conserve for the future generation. This is what in modern terms called Sustainability. Thus, in simple terms, sustainability means the capability of the individual, or society, or country of being sustained in terms of scarce available resources. Secondly, at the same time it is also important to undergo the process of development without hampering the availability of the resources for the present as well as future generation. Thus, sustainable development is a kind of approach towards the economic development of any country without compromising the quality and quantity of available resources for future generation.

Almost all the economies of the world today are facing the problem of sustainable development and it becomes the main target of every country to adopt the measures towards the best utilization of the available resources. This is a major challenge in case of developing and rural economies of the world.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PROBLEM OF GHOST VILLAGES IN UTTARAKHAND

Migration in simple words is the movement of population from one nation to another in search of better quality of life. The migration is effected by two main factors called Push and the Pull factors. Push factors are in the place of origin which is less attractive due to high rate of unemployment, poor standard of living, natural calamities and unorganized farm sectors and lack of government intervention in social development. On the other hand pull factors includes those conditions which makes the place of destination much more attractive due to higher standard of living, more job opportunities as compare to the place of origin.

In India especially, the Himalayan region faces the migration problem to large extent where various forms of migration arises due to various factors, such as low productivity, unemployment, lack of health and sanitation and educational opportunities. In India, there is a trend of rural out migration from the Himalayan region since long. The depletion of natural resources, climate change and fast urbanisation have also contributed to this problem to the great extent. (Joshi, Tiwari 2018)

Uttarakhand has a history of migration since 80s and from time to time demanding for the separate statehood to curb migration. This migration includes the relocating of human resources from one place to another with a view of permanent settlement outside the state. However, census data reveals that migration rates from the hilly areas of Uttarakhand have increased since its formation in 2000, with a notable shift in destination. Urban migration has been substantial, leading Uttarakhand to record the highest increase in the share of migration from the urban areas, among the other Himalayan states.

The Indian state of Uttarakhand's ghost villages pose a special difficulty for initiatives aimed at rural development. Many issues, including poor economic possibilities, inadequate infrastructure, degraded environmental conditions, and natural calamities like floods and landslides, have contributed to a large outflow from these settlements. They so deal with population decline, abandonment, and the breakdown of traditional means of subsistence. One of the main issues with these "ghost villages" is the lack of infrastructure and essential services, like power, water, medical care, and educational facilities. These places are becoming less appealing to potential inhabitants and investors due to the lack of basic services, which is another factor contributing to their downfall. Moreover, the difficulties associated with rural development in ghost villages are made worse by Uttarakhand's ecological vulnerability. The terrain's hills and deforestation

As per the survey conducted in Uttarakhand in 13 districts to study short term, long term migrants including daily commuters. It says that semi permanent out migrants are about 3.2 times higher than the permanent migrants in last 10 years. The reason for migration includes the lack of employment opportunities, health and sanitation facilities provided by the government.

In Uttarakhand, migration is a significant problem. A comparison of census data from 2001 and 2011 indicates that population growth in most of the state's mountain districts has been moderate and decadal. The population of the Almora and Pauri Garhwal districts decreased by 17868 individuals in absolute terms between 2001 and 2011, suggesting that a large number of residents from the state's hill areas have left. 2 administrative divisions, 13 districts, 102 tehsils, 95 development blocks, 670 nyaay panchayats, and 7950 gram panchayats make up the state.

According to the 2011 census, there are 16793 census villages, of which 1048 are deserted and 15745 are inhabited. A total of 3,83,726 people in 6338 gram panchayats have moved on a semi-permanent basis over the past ten years, albeit they still occasionally visit their homes in the villages. There have been 1, 18,981 permanent migrants from 3946 gram panchayats over the past ten years. All of the state's districts have a higher proportion of semi-permanent migrants than permanent migrants, according to data.

There are 564 villages, tonks, and majras in total whose populations have decreased by more than 50% over the past ten years. Similar to the state's empty villages, Pauri district has the most number of villages—112 villages/toks/majra—with a population loss of more than 50%. Almora comes in second with 80 villages in this category. The information demonstrates the differences between Uttarakhand's mountainous and plain. The main reason of migration from Uttarakhand is lack of employment opportunities in the state, due to which around 50.16% people are migrated. Education is on second contributing reason for migration which is about 15.2%.

AGE WISE MIGRATION STATUS FROM GRAM PANCHYATS (IN PERCENTAGE)

District	less than 25 years	26 to 35 years old	more than 35 years of age
Uttarkashi	30.68	36.56	32.77
Chamoli	26.71	43.49	29.79
Rudraprayag	28.97	41.83	29.2
Tehri Garhwal	29.26	40.92	29.82
Dehradun	38.41	34.47	27.12
Pauri Garhwal	29.23	41.67	29.1
Pithoragarh	28.32	42.58	29.1
Bageshwar	33.92	42.1	23.97
Almora	29.19	42.22	28.59
Champawat	25.23	45.49	29.29
Nainital	29.48	44.57	25.96
Udham Singh Nagar	16.66	43.34	40
Haridwar	13.99	52.79	33.22

Source : Migration Report, Govt of Uttarakhand

TOP MIGRATION DISTRICTS

Various villages in Uttarakhand are uninhabited after 2011. District wise distribution of such villages is given below:

District	Total revenue villages/toks/majra
Uttarkashi	70
Chamoli	41
Rudraprayag	20
Tehri Garhwal	58
Dehradun	7
Pauri Garhwal	186
Pithoragarh	75
Bageshwar	77
Almora	57
Champawat	64
Nainital	22
Udham Singh Nagar	19
Haridwar	38

SOURCE : Interim Report, Migration commission, Govt of Uttarakhand

NUMBER OF VILLAGES TOKS/ MAJRAS WHERE THE POPULATION HAS DECLINED MORE THAN 50% IN LAST 10 YEARS

#	DISTRICT	DECLINE IN POPULATION (IN %AGE)
1	Pauri Garhwal	112
2	Almora	80
3	Tehri Garhwal	71
4	Uttarkashi	63
5	Pithoragarh	45
6	Champawat	44
7	Dehradun	42
8	Bageshwar	37
9	Rudraprayg	23
10	Chamoli	18
11	Nainitaal	14
12	Udham Singh Nagar	9
13	Haridwar	7

Source : Interim Report on the status of migration in gram panchayats of Uttarakhand.

PROBLEM OBSERVATION AND KEY FINDINGS

From the given data it has been found that Uttarakhand state has been severely effected with the problem of inter state and intra-state migration. This further hampering the overall economic growth of the state. The problems identified so far has been summarised into the following points :

1. District Pauri Garwhal, Bageshwar and Uttarkashi are the district worst effected with the problem of migration
2. Lack of employment opportunity has been the one major reason of migration in the state
3. People in the age group of 26-35 migrated at the most in all the districts. Where as the average age of migration population is 42 years, which is the youth population of the state.
4. As per the census of 2011, around 1053 villages are completely abandoned and uninhabited and are termed as “ Ghost Villages “. Surprisingly, more that 300 such villages exists in district Pauri Garhwal alone. 33 villages no longer exists in state’s map.
5. According to Rural Development and Migration Prevention Commission Report, 2018-2022, around 3.3 lakh people migrated from different parts of the state, especially the hills and making a total of 1792 Ghost villages.

IMPACT OF EXTENSIVE MIGARTION ON SDGs

Migration is a very complex phenomenon influences by the various of factors and no universal facts and reasons can give answer to this typical demographic problem. There are numerous reasons which can be seen generally like education, health and employment opportunities. But every country / state or region has some hidden factors which may be economical or social which effects the thinking dynamics of the population and it is very important to understand the issue. Ghost towns frequently signify a loss of cultural heritage and human capital. Researching these phenomena aids in estimating the socioeconomic effects on communities, encompassing problems like traditional knowledge loss, social structure upheaval, and economic downturn. There could be negative environmental effects from abandoned communities, like biodiversity loss, greater danger of wildfires, and land degradation.

METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

Utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods through correlation, a mixed strategy has been chosen to investigate the relationship between migration and sustainable development. By quantitatively assessing the direction and intensity of their association, correlation analysis is a useful quantitative technique for comprehending the relationship between migration and sustainable development. Correlation analysis can be used to determine whether advancements in sustainable development are linked to lessening migration pressures by gathering data on a variety of sustainable development indicators, including income levels, educational attainment, and access to basic services, as well as

migration metrics, such as migration rates and patterns. greater migration in Uttarakhand suggests less sustainable growth in the districts with greater migration rates, such as Pauri Garwal, Uttarkashi, and Almora.

PROBABLE SOLUTION BY RESEARCHERS

These negative consequences highlight the problems that need to be tackled by stronger laws, international cooperation, and inclusive policies to ensure that migration serves the goals of sustainable development. To address these difficulties, a comprehensive strategy that recognizes the subtleties and connections between migration and sustainable development goals is required. Achieving the SDGs requires a well-rounded approach that tackles the benefits and challenges of migration. By focusing on resolving the root causes, encouraging cooperation, and protecting the rights and dignity of migrants, the government and other stakeholders can work together to achieve sustainable development goals.

Various research scholars and academicians have suggested various measures to solve the sensitive problem of extensive migration from Uttarakhand, whether within the state or outside the state. The general solution has a long list like promoting tourism, to make available the health and education facilities, adopting new techniques of farming, providing probable solutions to the social problems etc. But the grass root solution lies in the availability of the capital in the hands of the govt. Since ages it has been said that Uttarakhand is a “ Money Order Economy “, since most of the male population are employed into govt sector, especially the defence sector and the economy runs on the salary and pension. Now there is a need to identify the solution where the dependency on the government finance to be minimal.

THE FINANCIAL SOLUTION : CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mahatma Gandhi once said that “India lives in villages “. India can develop only when the benefits of economic growth and its development reaches the Indian villages and upto the last person of the rural India. Due to lack of availability of sufficient funds with the government which it can spend on rural development, therefore, Government encourages the participation of the private sector to come forward and join hands with the government towards the development of rural sector. Government is of view that businesses that operates and earns profit from the society must contribute a small proportion of their profit towards the development of the community by the way of giving back to the society. Businesses that invest in the development of rural community benefits in a variety of ways. Thus corporate operations that promote rural society and rural development not only benefits the community but also benefits the company towards its growth and maximization of profit and goodwill in the long run. It is the corporate self interest to pay a portion of their profits to the social welfare. (UN 202)

Thus, in this way, a tool introduced by the Government of India in 2013 called the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR is an initiative, which is taken by the corporate sector who takes the responsibility to contribute towards the development of the society one hand and to take care of environment on the other. The term CSR generally applies to the efforts that go beyond what may be required by regulations or environmental protection groups.

CSR also referred to as “Corporate Citizenship “and can involve incurring short term costs that do not provide an immediate financial benefits to the corporate but pay in long run benefitting the company. (Jaidka Anuradha, 2017)

CSR Trends in India

India is a developing country and by the year 2019-20 there are about 17007 companies which are associated to contribute towards CSR, putting together the total amount of Rs. 24,865.46 Crores in about 36,865 projects in around 34 States and Union territories. (National CSR Portal, 2023). During the Covid-19 period ie. 2020-21 the number of companies contributing towards CSR decreases drastically and the money spend on CSR also decreased from Rs. 24,864 crores to Rs. 20,360 crores and the projects falls to 25,598. (Kesva SR, 2022).

The top 10 companies which contributed towards CSR during 2020-21 are as follows :

#	Name of the Organization	CSR Spend (In crore rs.)	Type of Organization
1	Reliance Industries Ltd	922	PRIVATE
2	Tata Consultancy Services	674	PRIVATE
3	Tata Sons Pvt Ltd	545	PRIVATE
4	HDFC Bank	543	PRIVATE
5	Oil & Natural Gas Corporation ONGC	531	PUBLIC
6	Indian Oil	445	PUBLIC
7	National Thermal Power Corporation NTPC	418	PUBLIC
8	Infosys	361	PRIVATE
9	Indian Tobacco Company ITC	335	PRIVATE
10	WIPRO	246	PRIVATE

CSR spend in Uttarakhand State

The top districts to get CSR benefits in Uttarakhand are Dehradun, Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar, Chamoli, Tehri, Champawat, Pithoragarh, Nainital, Almora and Rudrapur. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited, PC Jeweller Limited, NHPC Limited, IRB Infrastructure Developers Limited, Bajaj Auto Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, and Patanjali Ayurved Limited are some of the companies which perform CSR activities in Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand is not in the top 15 list of CSR spending till 2021. Though after covid second phase, some companies have spend CSR in Uttarakhand but only in few districts which are in plains and not on the hilly region where the actual requirement exists.

Uttarakhand is at 18th place in the list with total of Rs. 1019 Crores spend under CSR in last 10 years.

#	STATE	CSR SPEND
1	Maharashtra	23,946
2	Karnataka	8,993
3	Gujarat	7,808
4	Tamil Nadu	6,876
5	Andhra Pradesh	5,750
6	Delhi	5,216
7	Uttar Pradesh	4,659
8	Odisha	4,377
9	Rajasthan	4,284
10	Haryana	3,445
11	Telangana	3,179
12	West Bengal	3,058
13	Madhya Pradesh	1,903
14	Assam	1,837
15	Kerala	1,747
16	Chhattisgarh	1,705
17	Jharkhand	1,109
18	Uttarakhand	1,019
19	Punjab	1,008
20	Bihar	871
21	Himachal Pradesh	559
22	Jammu And Kashmir	387
23	Nec/ Not Mentioned	367
24	Goa	322
25	Arunachal Pradesh	221
26	Chandigarh	140
27	Meghalaya	101
28	Dadra And Nagar Haveli	98
29	Sikkim	78
30	Manipur	74
31	Daman And Diu	70

32	Pondicherry	64
33	Tripura	63
34	Nagaland	27
35	Andaman And Nicobar	16
36	Leh & Ladakh	14
37	Mizoram	12
38	Lakshadweep	3

ANALYSING THE SOLUTION THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND ETHICAL CSR IMPLEMENTATION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies are pivotal in addressing the underlying causes of widespread migration through a focus on sustainable development and inclusive growth. By investing in local economies in regions with high migration rates, companies can generate job opportunities, enhance infrastructure, and stimulate economic progress. For instance, initiatives like local sourcing programs and vocational training can significantly improve local employment prospects. Additionally, promoting education and skill development equips individuals with the necessary tools to secure meaningful employment locally, achieved through partnerships with educational institutions and scholarships. Ensuring fair labor practices, such as ethical treatment and equitable compensation, supports both employees and migrant workers alike, exemplified by codes of conduct and supply chain audits. Furthermore, supporting community development initiatives like healthcare and housing improves living standards and reduces migration pressures. Environmental sustainability efforts, such as adopting eco-friendly practices and supporting disaster preparedness programs, address environmental factors contributing to displacement.

CONCLUSION

In nutshell, the problem of acute migration in Uttarakhand state can be feasibly dealt with the alternative solution, without putting any financial burden on the government funding as they already have limited amount of revenue receipts from the state. The fiscal deficit of the state itself is an indication that new sources of public finance has to be identified. One of the most viable source is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), once made mandatory, all the firms need to divert small portion back to the community. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts can be essential in mitigating the issues associated with intense migration. Companies may assist establish viable alternatives to migration and improve living conditions by investing in local infrastructure, education, and job creation. There is a further scope for this study, that an initiative need to be taken at the corporate level and at the local government level, where a viable solution can be worked out under Public Private Partnership Model.

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