Executive Summary

The present study is an attempt to understand the process of migration as a part of the structural transformation taking place in rural area. It is focused to know how migration has been contributing to shift the pillar of rural life and livelihood from agriculture. Evidences from all around the Global South including India indicate that the process of structural adjustment has resulted into a sharp fall in the contribution of agriculture in National Gross Domestic Product (GDP). At the ground, the reversal of agriculture has resulted in ‘deagrarianization’ or ‘depeasantization’ of rural life and livelihood. While land is likely to lose its importance as a determinant of wealth, power and security, households are coping, adapting and securing their livelihoods through diversification into non-agricultural activities including migration. The study resonates the pluralist concept of livelihood framework, which is based on the concept that one process may manifest itself through different outcome and it varies by time and space. Migration may be one among the several strategies of the household to overcome the structural barriers.

By design or default, the study is focused on circular migration (internal as well as international), where migrants are considered as absent members of the left behind household, remittance is considered as a component of the income portfolio of household and migration is considered as a household strategy to deploy its working members at different locations. Bihar has been chosen as the area of study, where pressure of population on land is high and migration is an established escape route from the underdeveloped local economy. The study is based on secondary as well primary data, but mainly relies on latter to understand migration-led diversification of livelihood. Rural area of Barauli Block in Gopalganj district has been selected as the area of study mainly on the basis of high out-migration rate. There are 71 villages in this block out of which 10 villages are selected according to the probability proportion to size (PPS) method. Circular systematic random sampling method has been adopted for sampling. Survey was conducted in 450 households in the month of August to December, 2013. Income and workforce related data have been analyzed to capture the ongoing process of diversification. Descriptive statistics as well as multivariate techniques have been used to understand the determinants of diversification and migration.

The results show that on average, a rural household is taking up migration activities while holding their foot in agriculture and in most cases they have combined both of these strategies. In the surveyed area around 43 per cent households are combining both the activities that emerged as a prominent feature of livelihood. In the study area where size of land holding is very small identical to the average in the state, income from agriculture is very meager and unequally distributed that requires to be supplemented by alternative sources of livelihood. The result from primary survey has again shown that, remittance as a prime source of income has greatly surpassed agriculture. This pattern of livelihood has emerged through a prominent feature of division of labour. In the study area, young adults are participating in out-migration, while agriculture is left mostly for the older adults. Results from multivariate analysis also suggest that more complex households (joint family) with more number of adult males show higher likelihood of diversifying its livelihood and out-migration. Thus, human agency is playing an important role in reorienting the livelihood of the area. The study indicates an emergence of new rurality with migration process. It provides evidences that the issue of poverty, social-mobility and class in the rural area at present cannot be understood leaving out migration from its framework.