ABSTRACT

The present study attempts to assess the livelihood sustainability of the Bihari migrant labourers in the two states of NER—Sikkim and Assam. Bihar is the state in India where development deficit is very high, and because of the lack of economic opportunities, the labourers from the rural areas are bound to migrate to other states in order to improve their economic status. What we have understood from this study is that the migration, over the years, has slowly become a way of life for the rural people of Bihar. Despite odd circumstances like distance from home, conflicts, unwelcoming attitude of the local towards the migrants, poor labour laws, little apathy from the government, lack of facilities, etc. the Bihari migrant labourers have been living in NER. The study found that the push factor dominates over the pull and network factors in making the rural Bihari unemployed/underemployed people to migrate. From the findings we arrive at a judgement that the conditions at the destination do not necessarily impact the decision of the migrants while choosing the place to migrate. The migrants hardly bother about the conflicts that take place at the destination, especially in Assam because they are driven by economic opportunity at the destination. As long as the place attracts them with employment opportunities and provide them better livelihood they do not care about the attitude of the local and difficulties at the destination. In a similar manner, the sustainability of Bihari labour migrants majorly depends upon the savings they do. They tend to maximize the savings so that they can send maximum portion of the savings back at home and it acts as a major force to make the migrants sustain their lives at destination despite of all their hardships. Another important factor to make the migrants sustain their lives at destination is the income difference which acts as one of the main driving forces. By
higher income difference it is meant the difference in income at origin (earnings at the time of departure at origin) and destination. While comparing the quality of life of these migrant labourers using different parameters we found that the migrants in Sikkim perform better than the migrants in Assam. Bihari migrants are still willing to continue their stay in the state Assam because Bihari migrants are primarily driven by the economic factors. For Bihari migrants what matters the most is the income they earn and send to the family members at home.