

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

The Effects of Seasonal Migration on Rural Social Capital:  
A Case of Chhattisgarh, India

A RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTED BY

**Ruhamah Paul**

**(India)**

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
SPECIALIZATION: RURAL LIVELIHOODS AND GLOBAL CHANGE

MEMBERS OF THE EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Dr. Kristin Komives  
Dr. David Dunham

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**This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies; the views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute**

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*Dedicated to the seasonal migrants of Chhattisgarh, who strive everyday to  
improve their livelihoods.*

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## ABSTRACT

Seasonal migration has become an increasingly important part of the livelihood strategies formed and used by smallholders in many rural and especially agricultural economies. It has become one of the main livelihood activities of smallholders during lean agricultural seasons in Chhattisgarh, India. While this activity supplements rurally earned incomes, it also has other effects, and this study points towards some of the social effects, on the migrant as well as on the household and rural community, which result from an absence of some members of the community caused by seasonal migration. Social capital is studied in terms of trust, norms and networks of the migrant and of the community, and the effect of seasonal migration on each of these components is looked at. While trust is barely affected, other aspects of social capital are severely affected by the absence due to migration and some are found to be declining in the countryside anyway. This change in rural society has implications that must be considered to gain a holistic view of migration or to formulate policy regarding migration.

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## **CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Migration to urban areas in search of work during periods of low agricultural activity has been recognized in recent studies of rural livelihoods as an important livelihood strategy employed by rural households. Such seasonal migration provides a source of income independent of the rural sector to the farm family, and often proves to be the ‘saving grace’ to households who choose to migrate during lean periods of the agricultural year. While the economic effects of this activity are often clearly visible, effects on other dimensions of rural life may not be. Social life within a community is one such important aspect that may be affected by seasonal migration.

“...it is ironic that in spite of the prevalent view that the consequences of migration for the individual and household are generally favorable, an equally prevalent view is that the consequences for the society as a whole are negative”, (Joshi & Verma 2004, p.5).

This paper seeks to study the effects of the absence of rural people caused by seasonal migration on the rural social capital of migrants and their families as well as that of the communities which they migrate from, in order to determine the extent to which seasonal migration undertaken as a livelihood activity may be detrimental to rural social capital.

### **BACKGROUND AND STUDY JUSTIFICATION**

Chhattisgarh is a new state in the East of India, formed in November 2000, out of the large central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. It is a predominantly agricultural state; 80% of its 20-million-strong population is rural, of which 90% is engaged in agriculture. 72% of all farming families are classified as small or marginal farm households by the Department of Agriculture. Only 19-20% of agricultural land is irrigated, leaving smallholders with few opportunities to engage in agricultural work outside of the annual rainy season which lasts from June to October, (Department of Agriculture, 2002). This is evident when looking at the comparatively small land area sown more than once a year: out of the total 5,327,000 hectares of land sown annually, only 564,000 hectares are sown more than once in an agricultural year, (Government of Chhattisgarh, 2002).

Other income generating activities available in rural Chhattisgarh in the dry seasons include working as farm laborers on larger farms which have access to irrigation, collecting non-timber forest produce, working in small rural industries, such as saw mills, match or *bidi* factories, or opening small shops and other small enterprises. These activities however, do not provide sufficient employment for the large labor force, and many resort to migration. Small towns bring small revenue, and larger cities like Raipur, Bhopal or Delhi are preferred migration destinations, where migrants usually work as laborers at brick kilns, at construction sites, or as domestic help. However, most migrants return to their villages during the cropping season in order to farm their land, resulting in a seasonal pattern of migration, dependent on agricultural seasons.

Chhattisgarhi smallholders work hard on their farms during the agricultural season. They also celebrate their festivals (either Hindu or tribal) with great zest and participate in weddings and other celebrations in their communities. Diwali, Dusshera, Holi and myriad other festivals occur in the non-agricultural season, between October and April. December through January is known as the 'wedding season'. Apart from this, there are the usual births, deaths and disputes, sometimes settled and sometimes not, among and between families. Chhattisgarh state held its first ever state level elections, (being a new state – founded in 2000, with an appointed government), in December 2003. These activities form an important part of rural life in addition to income earning activities.

Rural relationships are complex consisting of horizontal as well as vertical components and the rural household must continuously build and strengthen these bonds. Maintaining such relationships and networks can not only be enjoyable in and of themselves, but are also useful with regards to economic benefits that can come from "knowing people". However if people have to remain absent from their communities for a period of time, and yet return to those communities thus not leaving them completely, as is the case with seasonal migration, there arises a question regarding the extent to which they can still form such relationships and networks, which form their social capital, and function as a regular part of the rural communities they belong to.

In the study of rural livelihoods, social capital emerges as one of the main assets that a household must have in order to formulate a successful livelihood strategy. Having natural, physical, financial and human capital alone are not-enough because people live

together in societies and will draw upon reserves (of social capital), that have been formed over years through relationships with each other.

“It has now become recognized that these types of capital determine only partially the process of economic growth because they overlook the way in which the economic actors interact and organize themselves to generate growth and development. The missing link is social capital”, (Grootaert 1998, p.3).

In India, seasonal migration has been studied with reference to the working conditions of migrants at the migration destination, migrant rights, and other ethnographic, demographic and social issues, for example: in the state of West Bengal, where a large number of migrants are engaged mainly in agricultural labor on rice fields, or in Southern Gujarat, where workers migrate to work on sugar cane fields. It is far less common to find studies on the effects of migration in the rural area which the migrant leaves behind, especially in the case of temporary migration. For this reason, I would like to undertake a study that focuses on the social capital of the rural community the migrant belongs to, and returns to repeatedly in the case of seasonal migration.

Hence the main question to be answered will be:

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **Main Question:**

Does the absence of rural people caused by seasonal migration to urban areas lead to an erosion of the rural social capital of migrants from smallholder households in rural Chhattisgarh?

### **Sub-questions:**

- What dimensions of the social capital in rural areas of migrants does seasonal migration affect directly?
- What social/religious/political events do migrants forgo in order to work at migration destinations? What are the implications of non-participation in such activities?
- What effect does this have on their social networks and community life within the village community they migrate from?

- In what way do relationships of migrants, both horizontal as well as vertical, with other members of the community change after migration?

## **WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

Absence from the rural community for a significant part of the year neither allows migrants to participate in some of the activities of the community, nor allows them to form and maintain rural networks and rural relationships in a normal way. Assuming that these activities are vital for the formation, maintenance and successful utilization of rural social capital, and cannot be engaged in if the smallholder is away from his rural community, it could be said seasonal migration leads to an erosion of the rural social capital of migrants.

Alongside the assumption that participation in community activities, rural networks and relationships enables a smallholder to build social capital, is the assumption that non-participation in these activities and relationships prevents her/him from building or maintaining social capital. Underlying the relationships and networks that constitute social capital is the element of trust. If being away from the community means that members of the community trust one another less, leading to fewer or worse relationships, it can be said that social capital has been reduced or eroded in the rural community. Any such negative effect on social capital foreseen, experienced or/and expressed will be considered an *erosion of social capital*.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The main objectives of this paper are to investigate the extent to which rural social capital is maintained or eroded in rural communities and households from which seasonal migration to urban areas takes place. This has been done by examining the extent to which trust between members of the community who migrate and those who do not is maintained, the ability of migrants to participate in social, religious and political activities of the rural community to which they belong and the implications of non-participation, as well as the ability of migrants to form networks and association within the rural community to which they belong and the effects of non-participation

In order to research the effects of seasonal migration on social capital in rural areas, it is necessary to look at the phenomenon of seasonal migration as it occurs in Chhattisgarh. It is also necessary to study the nature of social capital, how it is built and maintained in rural Chhattisgarh and the implications for rural social capital that result from absences from the rural community due to seasonal migration. This will be done within the boundaries of social capital theory, and the study will be situated in the Rural Livelihoods Framework.

### **Secondary Data:**

Secondary data has been used to describe the nature of seasonal migration from rural Chhattisgarh. Information that helps understand the nature of social capital in rural Chhattisgarh has been used, by considering indicators that can be said to help individuals build and maintain social capital in the rural areas. In particular, secondary data has been used to recognize social, religious and political activities in rural Chhattisgarh, what time of the year they occur at, the roles different community members play in these events and the implications of the absence of community members at these events. Secondary data has also been employed to investigate the significance of different members participating in extended family networks, in patron-client relationships and in village level associations. This would help recognize the implications of the absence of migrants from the rural community for parts of the year. The data used is mostly qualitative, describing the rural community, relevant activities within the community and the roles people play within them.

### **Primary Data:**

In order to portray the functioning of the rural Chhattisgarhi community and to view concretely the effects seasonal migration has on villagers, Chata village in Chhattisgarh has been chosen as a case study. The use of this case study is intended as an example of some aspects of the effects of seasonal migration and to support the secondary data presented in one particular case. It is not intended to represent the situation in the rest of Chhattisgarh.

An overview of migration from Chata and its effects on social capital have been obtained from interviews with 2 village leaders, using the "*questionnaire for village leaders*", (see annex A). Nineteen seasonal migrants from Chata in district Mahasamund in

Chhattisgarh have been interviewed about changes they perceive in their social capital in the village after migration, using the “*questionnaire for migrants*”, (see annex Bi). The informants have been chosen at random from households with at least one member having migrated to an urban area during the year 2003-04. The collection of this data was carried out during the cropping season (late August – early September). Hence all seasonal migrants were present in the village. As informants for the survey were seasonal migrants, primary data collected was as perceived by the migrant. Additional comments made by a social activist working in this area of Chhattisgarh have also been referred to, and included in the paper, (Annex C), in order to fill gaps in the information to a certain extent.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:**

Undertaking a study on seasonal migration from Chhattisgarh is not an easy task as this is not a well-documented phenomenon. Data on seasonal migration has been pieced together from various sources, and there is particularly heavy reliance on a study done by Y.G. Joshi and D.K. Verma, which could have its own biases. Some secondary information has been obtained from news articles, which may or may not be reliable sources. This study has used some primary data in order to see whether this secondary information can be supported by a case study of one village, thus overcoming some of the limitations of the scarcity of available information.

Although primary data has been used to overcome some of the shortcomings of scarce secondary data, it has its own limitations. Individual responses have been aggregated to give a picture of social capital in the community; this is not the case in reality. A focused group discussion or some other collective method could have been used, besides the individual interviews to give a clearer picture at the community level. This has partially been overcome by including responses from village leaders about social capital in their village as a whole. Differentiated effects on male and female migrants do not come out clearly the way this study has been done. Several distance constraints exist as this paper about rural Chhattisgarh was written in the Netherlands.

Social capital as a concept is not clearly defined universally. Its manifestation would vary widely between communities and cultures. A lot of work previously done on social

capital has been in urban North American communities or communities different from rural Chhattisgarh on many accounts. This makes identifying indicators for social capital that would be applicable to the rural community difficult. This study tries to bring out a definition appropriate for use in rural Chhattisgarh by looking at various sources in a literature review, but many of the problems of defining social capital remain, the subjectivity of the concepts involved being a large part of them. Indicators that bring out features of social capital in rural Chhattisgarh have been used. Social capital theory is useful, but vital elements of it cannot be measured quantitatively, nor are there clear existing definitions of some elements. Three elements of social capital have been identified and used, but these by no means cover the entire concept of social capital.

Another problem with using social capital theory is its tendency to lean towards economic analysis. It looks at social capital in terms of its contribution to economic benefits or losses. While money is a very important element for rural people, it is not the only element needed for a wholesome and successful life. Therefore this study attempts to treat social capital both as a means to earning a living, and as an element to be enjoyed in and of itself. (Other limitations of social capital theory are mentioned in Chapter 2, with the theoretical framework).

This paper does not address social capital outside the village. Seasonal migration may enable the migrant to build ties with useful networks outside the rural area, which could ultimately contribute to a more successful livelihood strategy. There could also be *negative* social ties a migrant could form outside the rural area, and the effects of these negative ties could well be brought back into the village as the migrant returns every year. These are not accounted for in this study.

## **ORGANISATION**

This chapter has discussed the problem, the main questions to be answered, the methodology to be followed in this study, and its limitations. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows:

The main concepts discussed in the paper and where they fit into the analysis, along with a discussion of the theories around migration and the use of social capital theory in this study are looked at in chapter two. A general overview of the nature of social capital in rural Chhattisgarh is presented in chapter three. Chapter four looks at seasonal migration as it occurs in Chhattisgarh and also looks specifically at seasonal migration from Chata village in Chhattisgarh, providing a case study. The effects of seasonal migration on social capital are analyzed in chapter five using both the primary and secondary information presented in chapters three and four. Finally chapter six sums these effects up and discusses implications for policy.



## CHAPTER 2 – THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to carry out a study of the effects of seasonal migration on rural social capital, migration is viewed as part of a livelihood strategy formulated by a rural household, which reveals various aspects of the household and community that could be affected. Out of these various aspects, social capital is discussed in particular. Social capital theory is used to formulate indicators to recognize social capital within the community and to analyze effects of the absence of community members resulting from migration on these aspects of social capital.

The following diagram is a hypothetical presentation of the possible effects of migration on the social capital of migrants, situated in the broader context of migration being used as a livelihood strategy:

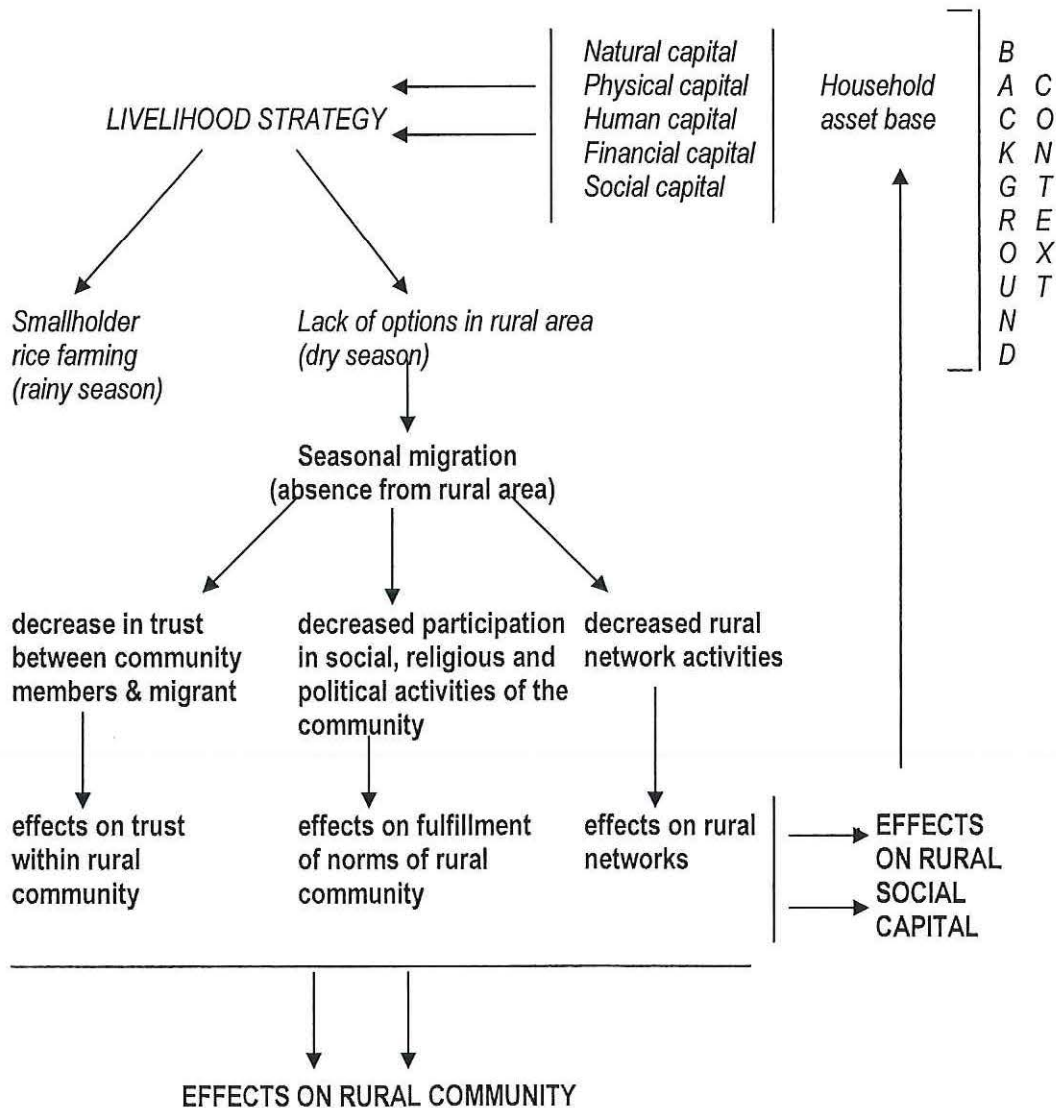


DIAGRAM 1: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

## **CONCEPTS:**

**Migration:** For this study, migration is the movement of an individual or a family from a rural area to an urban area and is of a seasonal kind, where the migrant(s) stays away from his/her rural home for a particular season (mostly the rabi season) and returns during the main cropping season (mostly the kharif season). This results in an absence of migrating members from the rural area for part of the year.

**Migrant Family / Migrant Household:** The term migrant family is used to describe any joint family household of which one or more member(s) have migrated from the rural home to an urban area during the year of the study (2003-04). The member(s) were present at the time of the survey even if they migrated that year as the survey was done during the cropping season.

**Rural Area:** For this study, a rural area is one where agriculture is the predominant productive activity and settlements are relatively small (the village used as a case study has 1100 inhabitants).

**Urban Area:** For this study an urban area is one where production of goods and services besides agriculture dominate and settlement size is large. This includes large towns as well as cities.

**Smallholder:** The small holder is one who has ownership of private land, but the size of this land is less than 2.5 acres. During the main cropping season (kharif season) the smallholder family cultivates this land, (although they may also work on the land of larger farmers in addition).

**Social Capital:** Social capital is taken to mean the “community and wider social claims” which rural households have access to because of their belonging to a certain group of people. The rural community is considered in this study.

Three main dimensions of social capital are looked at:

- **Trust:** this is the mutual understanding that all members of the community are working for the good of themselves and of each other, and is revealed in the manner in which transactions, relations and behavior are carried out.
- **Norms:** these are the “regulative principles” that govern the functioning of the society, and are followed by members of that society for various reasons.

- **Networks:** these may be horizontal (with extended family, friends and neighbors) or vertical (with patrons, village heads, and local politicians) in nature and consist of various relationships between members of the rural community. (adapted from Isham et.al 2002, p.27-74).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Many theories have grown around the issue of rural-urban migration. Most of these deal with the decision to migrate, drawing attention to the causes of migration, implying that the origin of migration should be studied rather than its effects. Examples of such theories are: Ravenstein's "gravity model", the "rural-urban labor transfer model" of Lewis, Sjaastad's "human investment theory" and Todaro's proposition that "the decision to migrate (stems from) the perception of the potential migrant of an expected stream of income", (Skeldon 1997, p.20-21). Migration is viewed as a predominantly economic activity in the prevailing literature, with little reference to the non-economic impacts of the activity. Theories are also concerned with the demographic changes to the rural and urban populations as a result of migration. Although these theories allow for the analysis of the consequences of migration on rural households, the scope for such analysis is not broadly based. These theories look at migration in isolation from other livelihood activities, or at best linked to agricultural activities, when in reality, it forms a part of a diverse livelihood portfolio a rural household maintains in order to attain its standard of living. Policy implications that result almost always encourage migration, considering the monetary benefits it brings, without considering the effects of the activity. A wide-ranging framework, such as the rural livelihoods framework, can be employed to look at the effects of a livelihood activity like migration on the rural household or rural community, which is the focus of this paper, rather than studying the activity itself.

The Rural Livelihoods Framework identifies 5 types of capital that form a base for rural households to be able to build a livelihood strategy upon. These forms of capital are not only used to form a livelihood strategy, but are also enhanced by livelihood activities, hence making the process of building, using and maintaining different forms of capital a cyclical process. One essential element of this base is social capital, (Ellis 2000, p.31-37). Social capital is a vital dimension to consider when thinking, not only about social development, but also about political and economic development in rural communities.

The relevance of social capital for development has not always been regarded highly. In the 1950s and 60s for example, social relationships were viewed as a hindrance to development, (Woolcock & Narayan 1999, p.4). The importance of the concept of social capital in development has increased greatly in recent years however. Robert Putnam's article, later developed into a book titled "Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community", serves as a breakthrough in social capital research, based in North American communities. Many others have engaged in social capital research; for example, James Coleman in the 1980s and Pierre Bourdieu in the 1990s, (Knight et al 2002, p.74), and the use of the concept of social capital in the development process has become widespread. International development organizations like the World Bank have also taken to using the idea of social capital to support current propositions of decentralization and local governance. "It is also now being used by the World Bank with regard to economic and societal development and by management experts as a way of thinking about organizational development", (Smith 2001, online article).

### **Social Capital Theory**

Social Capital Theory consists of ideas and reflections on the formation and use of social relationships of trust, of norms and of networks in order to achieve certain personal or community goals and to make collective action possible, (Stone 2001, p.6). Social capital theory argues that the possession and use of such social relationships is vital for the functioning of an individual or household in society, and is indeed an asset that brings both economic and social gains. It attempts to investigate the effects social relationships have on aspects of human existence and well-being within a social structure, and how these relationships are engaged in, and used by different individuals. The work of James Coleman, who looks at social capital in the context of education, or that of Pierre Bourdieu who studies social relations in an urban setting, like Robert Putnam does, are studies the present ideas on how social capital is thought to function, (Smith 2001).

"...the basic idea of social capital is that one's family, friends and associates constitute an important asset, one that can be called upon in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and/or leveraged for material gain.", (Woolcock & Narayan 1999, p.3).

These networks of relationships may improve welfare by increasing information flows, reducing transactions costs (due to greater trust), increasing consultative decision making, and helping to insure against crisis, (Haddad & Maluccio, 2000).

Beem proposes that the building of social capital requires people to interact with each other on a daily basis and to participate in activities that are considered normal in their communities.

“Without this interaction, on the other hand, trust decays”. “The concept of social capital contends that building or rebuilding community and trust requires face-to-face encounters,” (Beem in Smith, 2001).

In this paper the concept of social capital shall be applied to the study of rural livelihoods, and in particular to the study of seasonal migration as a livelihood activity, in order to see how social relationships, norms and networks and their formation are affected by seasonal migration in Chhattisgarh.

### **Classification of Social Capital**

Social Capital may be classified in many ways. Wendy Stone stresses that outcomes of social capital be separated from measures of social capital, (Stone 2001, p.6). This becomes difficult as many of the measures used for social capital are actually outcomes of it as well, for example trust comes out of having social capital, but also trust is used to indicate the presence or absence of social capital. There is a degree of overlap in this study.

Grootaert and Bastelaer recognize two forms of social capital: structural and cognitive; where visible networks and associations form structural social capital, and more “subjective and intangible elements such as generally accepted attitudes and norms of behavior, shared values, reciprocity and trust” form cognitive social capital. (Grootaert & Bastelaer 2002, p.3).

Social Capital is defined elsewhere as consisting of: “bonding social capital (strong ties between immediate family members, neighbors, close friends, and business associates sharing similar demographic characteristics); bridging social capital (weaker ties between

people from different ethnic, geographical, and occupational backgrounds but with similar economic status and political influence); linking social capital (ties between poor people and those in positions of influence in formal organizations such as banks, agricultural extension offices, schools, housing authorities, or the police)", (Woolcock, 2000). This definition shows the different levels in society where social capital comes into play.

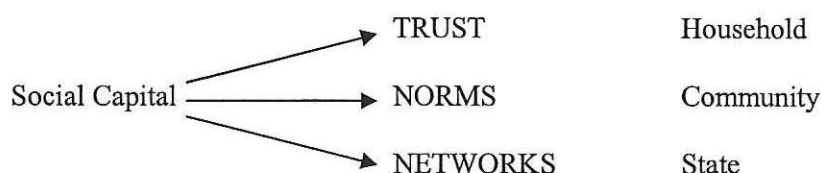


DIAGRAM 2: COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND LEVELS AT WHICH IT OCCURS

### Recognizing Social Capital in the rural community

Thus, trust, norms and networks form vital components of social capital. In order to identify the presence of these three components of social capital in the rural community, some indicators have been chosen for each component:

TABLE 1: INDICATORS FOR THE THREE COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

| DIMENSION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL | MEASURABLE INDICATORS / VARIABLES   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>TRUST</b>                | - subjective  |
| <b>NORMS</b>                | - Participation in community activities; births, deaths, weddings<br>- Participation in religious activities; celebration of festivals, worship<br>- Participation in political activities; state elections |
| <b>NETWORKS</b>             | - Extended family networks<br>- Patron-client relationships<br>- Village-level associations, organization and co-operation  |

These indicators have been chosen on the assumption that social capital is directly linked to participation in the activities or networks outlined above: trusting other members within a community, abiding by the norms of the community by participating in its social, religious and political activities, and operating within rural networks all serve to build, maintain or enhance social capital in some way or another.

The three components of social capital, trust, norms and networks are also thought to be linked to each other, as shown below. Trust lies at the base of relationships, while engaging in relationships also serves to build trust among members of the rural community. Participation in activities of the community may be used to secure a place in a certain network, such as a patron-client relationship, or to build trust or gain favor in the eyes of a certain member of the community.

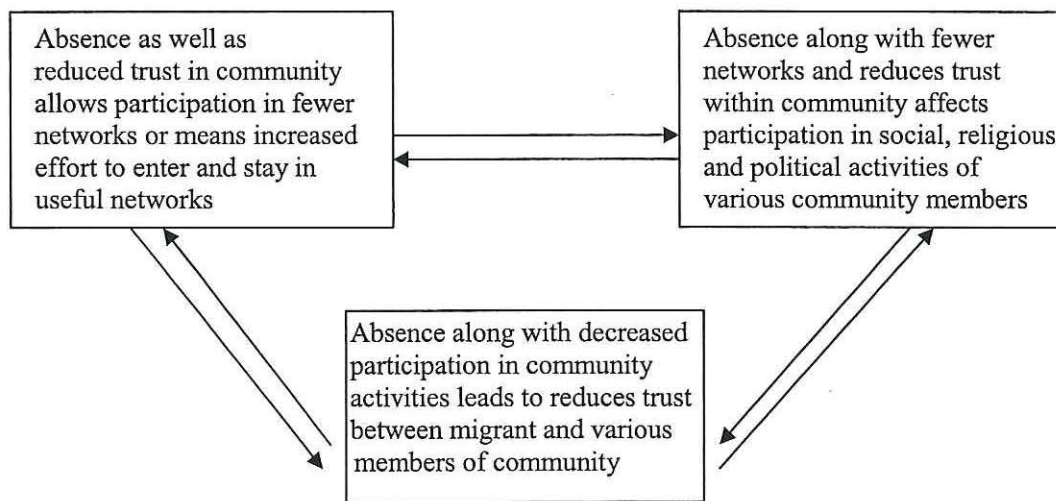


DIAGRAM 3: INTERRELATED EFFECTS OF ABSENCE DUE TO MIGRATION ON THREE COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

### Social Capital Theory – A Critique

In the study of a phenomenon such as seasonal migration, social capital theory is useful as it allows a look at issues other than the economics of migration. Many theories of migration reduce migrants to economic beings, while social capital theory has room for people as fathers, mothers, children, uncles, aunts, landlords, tenants, neighbors and friends, thus contributing a little more to the large canvas of the study of migration.

Many scholars and development practitioners agree on the importance of the concept of social capital in development. This has led to wide ranging definitions of the concept, stemming from the variety of disciplines that have used it. While it is used by many, social capital theory and the whole concept of social capital is also widely challenged and criticized. A major criticism is that the concept of social capital has remained embedded

in economic research and the relevance of social capital is measured in economic terms. The components of social capital are difficult, firstly to define, and secondly to measure, both qualitatively and quantitatively, causing difficulty in identifying and using them for purposes of research. Along with his criticism that the approach to social capital is too functional, Ben Fine says it lacks the aim of social change. It does not take into account the history, the culture or the local variations that occur between societies. He also finds that much of the discourse on social capital makes a division between social and non-social aspects of community life, while they are actually parts of one whole, (Bassani, 2002).

This study has attempted to overcome some of the constraints of using the concept of social capital and social capital theory by looking carefully at social capital in Chhattisgarh in the context of rural Indian culture. Indicators which lend themselves well to the local culture have been chosen. The purpose of social capital in this study also goes beyond just that of enhancing the economic performance of a rural household. However difficulty of empirical measurement remains.

This chapter has sought to outline a framework within which the effects of seasonal migration on rural social capital can be analyzed. Social capital theory offers many insights into the functioning of communities and into how human relationships are built and used by individuals and households in society, and it has been used in this paper, to study rural communities from which high levels of seasonal migration occur as is the case in Chhattisgarh. The constraints of social capital theory are also acknowledged.



## **CHAPTER 3 – RURAL SOCIAL CAPITAL IN CHHATTISGARH**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In order to study the effects of seasonal migration on the social capital of migrants and their communities in Chhattisgarh, a closer look must be taken at the nature of social capital in rural Chhattisgarh, how it is built and maintained and its role and importance in the rural community. This will be done in the following chapter.

Social capital in rural Chhattisgarh is best understood as consisting of the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible, (Cohen & Prusak, in Smith 2001).

### **THE NATURE OF RURAL SOCIAL CAPITAL IN CHHATTISGARH**

Rural India brings to mind a picture of poverty, vulnerability and insecurity for the 700 million people who inhabit its 600 000 villages, (statistics: Kalam, 2005). While this may be the case, rural India is a kaleidoscope of color, culture and activity. A prominent feature of rural life in India in general, and in the state of Chhattisgarh in particular, is the social relations that exist between members of the rural community and of rural society at large. Relationships between members of nuclear and extended families, between neighbors, friends and well-wishers, between groups or associations formed for religious or political purposes, and relations of production all play a vital role in the functioning (and sometimes dysfunction) of the rural community and contribute to the fabric of rural social capital. Some of these relationships have been considered exploitative, exacerbating prevalent inequalities, and while I do not wish to paint an idyllic picture of rural peace and harmony, I do wish to stress the importance of these social relations for the ability of the rural poor in Chhattisgarh to function within their communities in economic, socio-cultural and political terms despite the possibility of this negative consequence. Kerkvliet recognizes this need for people from different socio-economic classes to form alliances, despite the chance that one might exploit another in the process:

“...Relationships between people of different class and status are frequently antagonistic. Yet, for pragmatic, kinship and other reasons, people of different class and status positions may also be aligned”, (Kerkvliet 1990, p.80).

Certain social relations are built very strategically in order to enable families to achieve the goals they are in pursuit of. Marriage into a household of good repute, clientage to a powerful patron and joining a group for the benefits it brings rather than due to certain political commitment are examples of such strategy.

Because of the highly differentiated nature of rural Chhattisgarhi society based on social class, caste and in terms of wealth, it is more difficult for some individuals and households to function socially than it is for others. Families with ownership of land for example may have more leverage in society, both in social and economic terms, than the landless. Families with relatives in the same village would have an assured source of support in terms of labor, finances and moral support, which families without relatives in the village lack. The caste and economic status of a household plays a vital role in socio-economic functioning.

Social relations occur at various levels in the rural community:

*The family or household:* these are members of a family with very strong relationships with each other. (I will use this term to refer to the *joint family* – This may involve more members than a nuclear family, all of who live under the same roof and eat from the same pot).

*The extended family:* these are members of a large family who usually have very strong relationships with each other and often live in the same village. (I will use this term to refer to the members of the same family, although they might live separately; e.g.: uncles, aunts, grandparents, siblings).

*The 'bari':* this is the neighborhood in a village usually occupied by families of the same or similar caste and status, with fairly strong relationships between members, (can sometimes be fairly isolated from the rest of the village, especially if there are caste issues involved).

*The village community:* this is not homogenous, and consists of all members belonging to a certain geographical area. There are relationships prevalent among these members on varied terms. Caste differences and variations in possession of wealth provide grounds for power differentiation and social separation between households and individuals

within the village. Members of the village actively form links with other members that they perceive as useful in economic or social terms.

*Village-level associations:* these are groups of villagers who join together to accomplish certain goals decided by the group. However these groups can be used by some members to achieve benefits, (economic, social or other), and may be joined for reasons other than political commitment to the cause of the association. Such groups may originate within the village, such as farmers unions, or may be imposed on villagers by external bodies, such as self-help groups started by non-government organizations.

*Individual relationships:* individuals form relationships with each other for various purposes, ranging from companionship needs to obtaining access to otherwise unavailable resources, or gaining increased social status.

Relationships are built within these levels as well as across them. In this complex structure, every household must know which niche it fits into and, given this, how it can use relationships to its advantage. Social capital must be consciously built and maintained by each individual and by each household. How this is done is looked at by looking at the role of each of the components of social capital in turn.

## **BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RURAL SOCIAL CAPITAL**

### **The Role of Trust in Rural Social Capital**

In rural Chhattisgarh, many of the interactions are based on trust. People prefer to operate with other individuals or households they are familiar with and who they trust, over operating alongside strangers or community members of different backgrounds. This generally means that households of similar socio-economic status, caste and occupation form stronger ties amongst themselves than households of different socio-economic and caste conditions. However, building relationships based on trust with community members with different status is also beneficial, especially to smallholders. Hence it is in the social as well as economic interest of the smallholder household to gain the trust and to build relationships with a wide range of people within the rural community in order to be able to function well socially as well as economically.

Trust between members of joint and extended families allows for the sharing of chores and responsibility, leading to efficiency in the household, in terms of the amount of work that can be accomplished. For example: A grandmother looks after all her grandchildren, while all her sons or daughters-in-law can be engaged in productive activities. Association between rural individuals can also be of use to the smallholder; a landless farmer may join a union of workers who try to get fair pay or better working conditions from a landowner on whose fields they all work, for example.

Where vertical social relationships, such as relationships with a landlord or a moneylender are successful, these provide access to vital resources like land and financial capital. Smallholders often work hard at winning the trust of a certain patron who looks like a promising source of social and economic benefit to the client. Although these relationships are sometimes exploitative, they are vital for smallholders, and often used tactically to obtain required assets to function in the rural area, given the prevalent conditions.

### **The Role of Social Activities in Rural Social Capital**

The social activities that accompany births, weddings and deaths have been chosen in order to study this aspect of social capital, and the ability of members of the community to participate in social activities. In a rural community it is of utmost importance for members of an extended family or of a neighborhood to attend the social activities being organized in their family or neighborhood. A failure to participate in these activities could lead to a souring of relationships or a breakdown of reciprocity within the community. It is common for households to keep a close watch on who is attending or not attending which social functions, and to make social judgments based on such observations. Thus it is vital for rural households to attend the social events of families they would like to be on good terms with for various economic or social reasons, and to invite such families to their own events in turn.

## Birth:

The birth of a child is a much awaited event in the rural community. There are several ceremonies that are followed in rural Hindu communities before the birth of the child as well as after.

TABLE 3: CEREMONIES PERFORMED AROUND THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

Ceremonies related to child birth:

| Ceremony     | Activity   | Time   |
|--------------|--|--|
| Saddah       | Celebration with friends of expectant mother – mother receives special food, clothes and other useful gifts.   | 5 <sup>th</sup> month and 7 <sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy |
| Namakaran    | Naming ceremony conducted by family priest, attended by family, friends and neighbors of child followed by celebrations in the community.                          | 11 <sup>th</sup> day (typically)                             |
| Annapraashan | First food ceremony – the child is fed solid food for the first time in a religious ceremony conducted by family priest, followed by celebrations in the community | 6 <sup>th</sup> month  |
| Mundan       | Head shaving ceremony performed by the family priest to purify the child, attended by relatives and friends followed by celebrations in the community              | 3 <sup>rd</sup> year   |

The ceremonies that take place around the birth of a child are held with great importance in the rural community. The presence of a priest, nearest family members and relatives at these ceremonies is vital, and the whole community is involved in the celebrations that follow. While the men of the household organize the activities and make sure all relevant people are informed about the ceremonies, call for the priest and so on, the women of the household ensure the preparation of food, gifts for the priest and a women's singing team are ready for the ceremony. Helping a powerful household at special occasions is one way in which smallholders can get an edge over others in forming a relationship with such a household. Likewise, inviting an influential household and its members for a ceremony would provide a smallholder household with social standing and could lead to the formation of a useful relationship in the future, if the invitation is accepted.

**Wedding:**

A wedding marks the most important event in a family, not only for the bride and groom but as much for the two larger families that come together through the union. The process of selecting a suitable partner for a child is the responsibility of the parents and other older members of the extended family and is a subtle process of two families knowing each other well before one suggests an alliance with a family that meets as many of the others requirements as possible. As most marriages are thus arranged by family members it is important to choose a partner for the child who is in good standing in the eyes of other villagers and who is in a comparatively stable financial and social position. This requires trustworthiness and strong ties within the social circle or a particular network a household belongs to and these ties have to be built and regularly maintained.

“Marriages are celebrated as the crucial events in a family’s life cycle. They are regarded as family affairs of the utmost importance”, (Stern 1993, p.34).

In Chhattisgarh it is common to hold weddings during November or December. A lot of planning and preparation goes into arranging a wedding, before the actual ceremony, which lasts for many days, takes place. In order to make this occasion as festive and memorable as possible, family, friends and neighbors join together to help with arrangements and the family calls on useful acquaintances they have made over years, such as cooking parties, entertainers or religious people. It is important for members of the community to be seen in the right light; for example a smallholder might like to be seen as doing small favors or helping manually at the wedding of a more influential family. This is also a time when the family is on display before the community, and wealth or status is often shown.

**Death:**

The occurrence of a death in a family and in a community is an occasion of mourning the loss of a member together. The role of the eldest or youngest son as the head mourner is of utmost importance. If a son is not present to light the funeral pyre of his parent, he is considered as not having fulfilled his duty in the family; a grave case of non-compliance with social norms. There is usually a meal during the fortnight or so following the death for the members of the community which has religious significance, but is also a chance for relatives and neighbors to come and express their sympathy for the bereaved family.

“After the death of a family member, the relatives become involved in ceremonies for preparation of the body and a procession to the burning or burial ground...At the funeral site, in the presence of the male mourners, the closest relative of the deceased (usually the eldest son) takes charge of the final rite and, if it is cremation, lights the funeral pyre.” (Cline, 2005).

Rituals around the death of a community member are usually reserved for family members, and neighbors and close friends of the same caste and social status; community members outside this close circle are not invited. However, when the meal is arranged, it is a larger occasion which other members of the community are invited to participate in.

### **The Role of Religious Activities in Rural Social Capital**

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGION IN CHHATTISGARH:

| <i>Religion</i> | <i>Adherents as % of total population</i> |
|-----------------|---|
| Hindu           | 93%                                       |
| Christian       | 5%  |
| Muslim          | 1%  |
| Jain            | -   |
| Other           | -   |

(Adapted from NIC-ICMR, 2005).

NOTE: 37% of the population is tribal, but many adhere to Hindu customs and norms from years of mingling between communities.

Hinduism is adhered to by a large percentage of the Chhattisgarhi population, and the festivals of this religion will be used to gauge participation of members of the community in religious activities.

Hindu festivals have great religious significance and are celebrated with sanctity as well as festivity. In rural Chhattisgarh, festivals are also linked to the agricultural cycle. Traditional worship (*poojas*), food, dancing, and other activities make the celebrations not only a time of merriment, but also a time of social bonding with family and friends and of refreshing from the mundane daily routine. Such celebration also leads to the preservation of a rich and ancient culture, heritage, and indeed a way of life. The preparation for celebration means that families and neighbors have to work together, for

example women prepare sweets and festive delicacies together, and men join together to make arrangements for a procession or out-door entertainment night. Such activities serve to form and strengthen long-lasting bonds among members of a community. Smallholders are careful to ensure that the right people are invited to their parties and such festivities are sometimes used to portray an image of popularity in the community, which can later be of use to the household.

TABLE 5: OCCURRENCE OF FESTIVALS CELEBRATED IN CHHATTISGARH DURING THE HINDU YEAR:

(See Extended version in Annex E)

| Festival                            | Month                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ram Navmi                           | Chaitra                   |
| Baisakhi                            | Vaisakha                  |
| Akthi                               | Vaisakha                  |
| Arwa Teej                           | Vaisakha                  |
| Matha Pahunchni                     | Asadha                    |
| Hareli                              | Shravana                  |
| Saavanahi                           | Shravana                  |
| Raksha Bandhan                      | Shravana                  |
| Athe Gokul                          | Bhadra                    |
| Krishna Janmashtami                 | Bhadra                    |
| Teeja                               | Bhadra                    |
| Poora (Pola)                        | Bhadra                    |
| Ganeesh Chathurthi                  | Bhadra                    |
| Pither                              | Asvina                    |
| Navakhai                            | Asvina                    |
| Dashera (Navratri)                  | Asvina                    |
| Diwali                              | Kartika                   |
| Bhai Dooj                           | Kartika                   |
| Devutani                            | Kartika                   |
| Chercher Poash Poornima<br>(Charta) | Pausa                     |
| Mela                                | Magha                     |
| Holi                                | Phalguna                  |
| Guru Ghansidas Jayanti              | 18 <sup>th</sup> December |

(Saranam Encyclopedia, 2005)



## The Role of Political Activities in Rural Social Capital

Politics in rural Chhattisgarh are played at every level. When it comes to state level elections, politicians seek votes from as many people as possible and in return for this ‘loyalty’ voters are given gifts or subsidies in cash or in kind. This practice gives the voters a chance to benefit economically from the networks that go with elections, since patrons and local level politicians shower their clients with benefits and incentives. According to Akshay Sail, a social activist working in Chhattisgarh, “The main aim of participating in elections, whether it is state assembly elections or national elections, is to basically make as many monetary gains as possible. They (citizens) are well aware of the fact that once the elections are over the public representative is not going to spare any time for them”, (Sail, in additional comments, see annex 6). For the smallholder, this is a good chance to win the affections of a desired patron by giving him the political support he requires. The state level elections in Chhattisgarh were held on December 1, 2003.

TABLE 6: ELECTION TURN OUT RATES FOR STATE LEVEL ELECTIONS: HELD ON DECEMBER 01, 2003:

| Constituency | No. of registered voters | Total no. of votes | Total turn-out |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Chhattisgarh | 13,541,199               | 9,655,275          | 71.3%          |

(Elections Commission of India, 2003)

Another source states over 55% voters cast a ballot. (PTI 2003, Election Special).

### Extended Family Networks and Social Capital

A TYPICAL JOINT FAMILY IN RURAL INDIA:

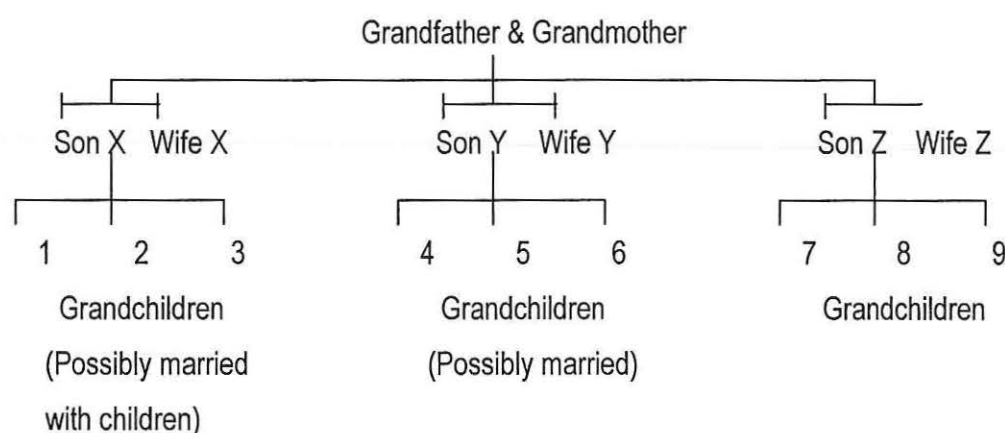


DIAGRAM 4: A TYPICAL JOINT FAMILY TREE IN RURAL INDIA

The family tree indicates 12 – 20 people living under one roof. (However, many families nowadays live separately from the family patriarch, which would be more akin to a nuclear family of father, mother, and children). A typical extended family would consist of two or more of such joint family units, which could be a grandfather's family and one or two of his brothers' families, which would mean 30-45 members who would consider themselves close relatives, probably living in one village. (Some people move with their entire family to another village, but they usually remain in the same village as their inherited property would be in that village. Women of course move in many cases, as they are required to go to the home of their husband when they are married).

Members of an extended family help other members in many ways; financially, with farm labor, with chores, and with emotional needs. Children are brought up in the care of members of the same extended family ensuring a transfer of values and norms that are acceptable to the parents of the child as well as to the community. This is also an effective way of transmitting traditions and culture down through generations. In Chhattisgarh this is an important network that almost all rural people are involved in and actively make use of.

For the smallholder households it is essential to maintain good relations with their extended families, despite the sometimes unequal relationships within it, because this is one source where any form of support is always available. Often there are disputes between members of extended families and at such points, relationships are severed, altered in some way, or preserved depending on how the dispute is dealt with. Rural households who rely heavily on support from their extended family would try and preserve relationships, while those who do not rely so heavily would perhaps not give so much importance to the preservation of extended family relationships, if faced with disagreement or crisis within the network.

### **The Role of Patron-client Relationships in Social Capital**

The most common types of patron-client relationships in the rural area are landlord-tenant relationships, moneylender-borrower relationships, and trader-producer relationships. Smallholders in rural Chhattisgarh are almost always involved in a relationship with a patron: a landlord or a money lender in most cases. Often viewed as a

negative occurrence, the patron-client relationship is of great importance to both patron and client in rural Chhattisgarh, given the conditions of limited access to resources for the client and the need for local-level support in favor of the patron. Relationships with patrons are used by clients for a variety of reasons and they carefully choose the patrons they want to be associated with in order to obtain their needs.

“Clientage is the refuge of lower level village households, and it can become their prison. Clients need patrons as sources of relatively secure employment in what is usually a buyers market for agricultural labor. They need or want patrons to help them deal with the often unfamiliar and unfriendly world outside their villages: the world of politicians, bureaucrats and police. Because they have little or no land capital to serve as their collateral, clients need patrons for unsecured loans. Their labor is their collateral, and debt bondage is the most extreme form of clientage”, (Stern 1993, p.99).

“Patrons may need clients as assured sources of labor during peak periods in the agricultural cycle. They may want clients because it is a good and pleasing thing to be a patron. Patrons also need clients to fight their factional battles. Patron-client relationships are based on these factions”, (Stern 1993, p.99).

Engaging in patron-client relationships provide smallholders with both economic and social gains, in the form of access to financial and physical assets as well as social status, depending on how influential or popular their patron is in the village community.

### **The Role of Village-Level Association in Social Capital**

In order for political action or any other collective action to take place, it is important that villagers be associated or organized in some way.

“The most effective village level organization present in the village structure is the Panchayat which gives them (villagers) some control over the functioning of their village”, (Sail 2005, additional comments, see annex 6). The Panchayat system has been put in place by the government, and is supposed to enhance the ability (especially) of rural people to participate in the governance of their communities. The Panchayat is a five-member council, elected by the local village community, and serves for a five-year term. Since the Panchayat is locally elected and operates at the village level, villagers feel

they have the power to choose leaders who can really work for the benefit of their communities. Various activities are undertaken by the Panchayat in order to meet the needs of the community as well as for its progress, (See Annex F, Panchayati Raj, 2005). Many other village organizations either formed by villagers themselves or formed by outside non-government organizations, function in rural Chhattisgarh. The rural self-help group is a classic example of this, and numerous such associations operate in the area. These serve to bring groups of people, who usually have a similar occupation, status, problem, or some other common factor together in order to achieve one goal. Such association serves to build ties between members of the group, which may then be used in various ways, not necessarily in ways intended at the formation of the association.

Thus, various forms of social relationships and networks perform different functions for smallholder households and individuals:

TABLE 2: USEFULNESS OF VARIOUS FORMS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

| Relationship   | Purpose  |
|--|--|
| Joint and extended family relationships  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- satisfaction and fulfillment of need for family</li> <li>- sharing of work and chores, physical support/labor</li> <li>- insurance (especially in times of crisis), financial support</li> <li>- moral and emotional support</li> <li>- creation of environment for children to learn in</li> </ul>   |
| Neighborhood relationships<br>And friendships  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- satisfaction and fulfillment of need for companionship</li> <li>- reciprocal sharing of work and chores, physical support/labor</li> <li>- moral support during special occasions and crises</li> <li>- safety net in times of crisis</li> </ul>  |
| Individual relationships<br>(with village elders, politicians, patrons)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- access to credit &amp; resources (may not be otherwise available), with flexibility regarding pay-back</li> <li>- economic and welfare benefits in the form of gifts in cash and kind at special occasions, in exchange for loyalty of client</li> <li>- introduction or reference for a job or education</li> <li>- political support for patron and defense mechanism for client</li> </ul> |
| Village-level associations<br>(benefits depend on how group is formed and power distribution within the group) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- access to economies of scale group activities lead to better organization and productivity</li> <li>- availability of safety net in times of crisis as group can help</li> <li>- building of local political / collective strength</li> <li>- building of relationships with members of the community who may be outside the usual circle of one's acquaintances</li> </ul>                   |

Social capital is built among rural folk through living together and participating in the activities of each others families and of the community together. Being a part of the rural community also gives households access to influential individuals they would like to form relationships with for benefits. This is not to suggest that living together does not produce a degree of friction, leading to dispute sometimes. Inequality is also a stark reality in the rural communities of Chhattisgarh. Participating fully in a community does however serve to form and strengthen bonds (for various reasons) that develop over years, and sometimes last through generations.

The three aspects of social capital studied in this paper are interlinked. One aids the other two in terms of building as well as maintaining social capital. Trust between individuals as well as between households is used to obtain access to useful networks, while participating in networks results in trust between individuals in turn. Participating in the right social and religious activities of various households and performing the right kind of duties during these ritual activities also provides smallholders with access to influential and powerful households, and these social norms serve to regulate relationships within networks so that they do not become too manipulative; for example a degree of reciprocation is always involved so it is not always one party giving and the other taking, (Kerkvliet 1990, p.204). Whether or not a certain household is trusted by other members of the community or invited to the community events of other households also plays a role in the social acceptability of this household in the eyes of the others. Thus, the building of social capital requires an active effort on the part of all rural households to identify other individuals and households within their community, alliances with whom will bring them social and economic benefits. Rural households then try to build and maintain relationships with such “useful” households, which form an important asset.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN RURAL CHHATTISGARH

Social capital can be of importance to smallholders in economic as well as social terms.

### **Economic Importance**

Rural Chhattisgarh is home to 81% of the population of the state, a large proportion of which consists of small and marginal farmers and landless laborers. Frank Ellis identifies five types of capital that are useful to rural households, in order to construct a successful livelihood strategy. These forms of capital are: natural, physical, human, financial and social capital, (Ellis 2000, p.16). Poor rural households often lack sufficient quantities of land, money, machines, education and other stocks that could be useful for formulating a useful set of livelihood activities. Social capital in the form of extended family ties, patron-client relationships, rural networks and trust-based individual relationships is one important way to make up for these deficiencies, as trust, relationships and networks formed in the rural areas allow households to gain access to some of the assets that they have little chance of possessing on their own, such as land or farm machinery leased from rich landowners, and financial assets from money lenders. Along with access to assets, social capital allows smallholder households access to markets, and to income-earning opportunities in the form of short-term informal contracts and other formal or informal work agreements, within as well as outside of the rural area through contacts they develop.

“...social relationships...are especially significant for the poor: with little by way of assets, modest income or formal education, the poor are left to devise survival and mobility strategies that draw on their social capital” (Woolcock in Isham et. al. 2002, p.18).

Besides these, there are small ways in which trust or relationships formed within the rural area benefit smallholders, for example: whether or not a household can buy provisions on credit from a village shop would depend on whether or not the shop owner trusts that they will pay back, or knows the family well enough to know that they are capable of paying back. The economic importance of social capital differs widely for households of different economic and social status.

Social capital is therefore an essential part of an income-earning strategy for smallholders and a good stock of social capital can ensure a better livelihood in rural Chhattisgarh. Social capital as an asset must be built strategically by a rural household so that its members are able to gain access to the most needed resources through the most efficient channels; powerful patrons, well-maintained extended family relationships, a well chosen family for a child to marry into, or giving shelter to a distant relative's child in return for his/her labor, are examples of how smallholders might build and use social relationships for economic benefits.

### **Socio-cultural Importance**

Social, cultural and religious activities play an important role in the functioning of a rural society. Participation in such activities allows rural households and individuals to build, strengthen and maintain social capital successfully. It also allows for the maintenance of Chhattisgarhi culture, religion and customs, which give individuals and households a strong sense of identity, community and belonging. This is often lost when individuals leave the rural community. It also allows for the maintenance of law and order, provided rural governance structures are adhered to. Norms set in the community lead to the formation of a social structure that regulates social life in a village. Through these norms, prevailing power relations and class differences are re-iterated and smallholders must steer around these hierarchies to get the social standing in their society which they require to operate successfully.

“The basic function of the village community is social control over the behavior of the various families and individuals. The community establishes definite norms, moral standards and rules of conduct”. “Kinship and neighborly bonds oblige the individual to observe family norms of behavior, and ensure the effectiveness of the family's intervention”, (Galeski 1972, p.89).

The ability to form social relationships and networks is vital for smallholder households, who can choose the alliances they form in their rural area in order not only to lead to a strong livelihood base, but also to a socially satisfying life. This is especially seen in the formation of links with influential patrons through winning their trust, by trying to participate in the social and religious activities of important people in the village or by inviting important members to participate in one's own social and religious celebrations,

by attempting to join village groups that bring access to social status, and by trying to marry a child into a more powerful household than one's own. This shows the potential benefits of the 'right' ties and relationships. Not only in important decisions, but in everyday dealings, smallholders have the chance to build useful ties, such as with a neighbor who can watch small children while a mother goes out to fetch water, or with extended family and neighbors, who provide moral support and companionship.

### **Importance of Social Capital for Functioning Within the Rural Community**

Chhattisgarh is often referred to as a "relatively backward" state. This has been associated with its high rural population, dependence on primary production, and high inequality. Policy makers have recognized that the answer to these problems is development in the rural sector. Infrastructure has been improved to a certain extent, with Chhattisgarh having better roads and road networks than the rest of Madhya Pradesh, (which it was a part of prior to 2000), and a good supply of power. However, other aspects that enable rural development still function poorly, for example irrigation facilities, and largely through informal arrangements, such as marketing and extension services for agriculture. Numerous government schemes have been put in place to provide opportunities and facilitate growth in the rural areas, with limited success, partly due to poor implementation.

Given these conditions, it is vital for smallholders in rural Chhattisgarh to have alternative ways to be able to earn a substantial living from livelihood activities as well as to find meaning in a larger sense, and to enjoy their relationships, their culture and their community. Smallholders often go out of their way to get into the right networks and to form and maintain social relationships through which they might benefit socially as well as economically. Building trust between individuals and households in the community, attending social, religious and political functions and forming useful horizontal as well as vertical networks are vital activities for every member of the rural community in Chhattisgarh, especially smallholders. Social capital forms a vital part of life in a rural community as well as of the asset base required for survival in rural Chhattisgarh. Any missed opportunities to build or maintain this would have social, political and economic implications for the ability of a smallholder household to form a viable livelihood strategy, and therefore to survive.



## **CHAPTER 4 – MIGRATION IN CHHATTISGARH: AN OVERVIEW**

The movement of laborers for the purpose of employment is not a new phenomenon in India. While labor migration was more coercive in colonial times, it is now considered voluntary, forming an important livelihood option for rural laborers with little rural work or income for various reasons.

This chapter takes a look at rural-urban migration from Chhattisgarh and considers which members of the community migrate, where they go, for how long, what they do at the migration destination and other information regarding this phenomenon. The final part of the chapter presents a case study of a village in Chhattisgarh and looks at the effects of seasonal migration on the social capital of the migrants as well as of their community.

### **MIGRATION IN CHHATTISGARH:**

In Chhattisgarh, seasonal migration is a relatively recent phenomenon and has gained importance as a livelihood strategy.

“On the whole, seasonal labor migration from Chhattisgarh can largely be viewed as a necessity-based migration to supplement the household income in the absence of any other alternative”, (Joshi & Verma 2004, p.144).

Although labor migration of the type studied in this paper is poorly documented, with little empirical data available, it is accepted by many scholars as a common occurrence:

“In the plains area, in the absence of assured irrigation and second crop over a large area, the rural landless could only get part-time seasonal employment within Chhattisgarh and a larger part of the local labor force migrated to other parts of the country from this region as a result,” (Sen 2002, p.3).

“The rural economy is dependent on a single rain-fed annual crop. Seasonal migration to other parts of India in search of employment is a regular and grim feature of rural life”, (About Bilaspur, 2005).

“Seasonal migration to cities in search of employment is extremely common. After the near total crop failure in 1997, people migrated on an unprecedented scale with many migrating for the first time. These migrant workers from Chhattisgarh are considered cheap, hardworking and gullible. They are employed in brick kilns and in construction and other unorganized sector activities in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and Punjab and are ruthlessly exploited”, (About Bilaspur, 2005).

## THE NATURE OF MIGRATION AND MIGRANT CHARACTERISTICS

In the Chhattisgarh region, most migration is seasonal in nature, with migrants going to cities for work, usually to other states of India, and returning to their villages in time for the beginning of the *kharif* cropping season. A study carried out by Joshi and Verma in this region, reveals that 87% of migration was seasonal while 13% was permanent. (Joshi & Verma 2004, p.91). Where permanent migration does occur, it is usually from better-off households.

Seasonal migration takes place from all over Chhattisgarh and is not restricted to certain areas or certain tribal or caste groups.

TABLE 7: DISTRICT WISE VOLUME OF MIGRATION:

| District in Chhattisgarh | Migration volume |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Bilaspur                 | 9.2              |
| Raigarh                  | 5.6              |
| Rajnandgaon              | 7.1              |
| Durg                     | 12.2             |
| Raipur                   | 8.7              |

(Adapted from Joshi & Verma 2004, p.70)

NOTE: Districts have been aggregated according to district division prior to formation of Chhattisgarh as a state.

Of all migrants in the study done by Joshi and Verma, 56.6% were male and 43.3% were female. (Joshi & Verma 2004, p.82) This shows that migration is not limited to men alone. The age group data shows that it occurs most frequently among populations of working age.

TABLE 8: DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANTS AS PER AGE GROUP:

| Migrant age group | % of total migrants |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| <6 years          | 21.7                |
| 6-14 years        | 13.1                |
| 15-45 years       | 57.6                |
| 46-59 years       | 6.6                 |
| >60 years         | 1.0                 |

(Adapted from Joshi & Verma 2004, p.81)

Most migrants are marginal farmers or landless laborers, which is in line with the fact that these are the most vulnerable rural groups and have the least options available to them within the rural areas in times of employment shortages.

TABLE 9: OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY OF MIGRANTS:

| Migrant Category | % of total migrants |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Marginal farmer  | 46.6                |
| Small farmer     | 13.6                |
| Other farmer     | 4.8                 |
| Landless laborer | 35.1                |
| Other occupation | 0.2                 |

(Adapted from Joshi & Verma 2004, p.87)

Because migration from rural Chhattisgarh is dependent on the non-availability of agricultural work in the rural area and on the availability of substitute work in the urban areas, it mostly occurs in the period between agricultural seasons in Chhattisgarh. Rice is grown in the *kharif* season, from June to October. Most migrant laborers from Chhattisgarh work on construction sites or at brick kilns in cities, which require dry weather and therefore maximum employment occurs between November and May, which is the dry season in central and northern India.

TABLE 10: MONTHS IN WHICH MIGRANTS LEAVE FROM AND RETURN TO RURAL AREA:

| Month     | % migrants leave | % migrants return |
|-----------|------------------|-------------------|
| January   | 37.4             | 1.1               |
| February  | 5.2              | 3.3               |
| March     | 8.4              | 4.7               |
| April     | 3.1              | 6.9               |
| May       | 1.2              | 10.5              |
| June      | 2.3              | 50.5              |
| July      | 3.5              | 2.7               |
| August    | 1.4              | 2.2               |
| September | 3.5              | 2.6               |
| October   | 5.7              | 9.1               |
| November  | 12.2             | 2.9               |
| December  | 18.8             | 3.5               |

(Adapted from Joshi & Verma 2004, p.95-96)

Seasonal migration in Chhattisgarh also increases significantly in years of drought or poor crop planting, confirming that it is a phenomenon related to the availability of agricultural work in the rural areas.

Most migrants go into cities for work only for part of the year and return to their villages for the cropping season. This indicates that they do not stay in urban areas for long enough to build substantial capital in the form of houses, permanent jobs, or social networks.

#### **CASE STUDY: SEASONAL MIGRATION FROM CHATA**

Chata is one of the many small villages in Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh, with a population of 1100. A large proportion of the population is engaged in agriculture during the rainy season, a major part of this being smallholder agriculture, where farmers cultivate self-owned land. There are a few larger farms where people work as laborers.

## OVERVIEW OF MIGRATION IN CHATA:

Seasonal migration occurs on a regular basis from this village, although there is no reliable secondary information available on this feature of the livelihood strategy of peasants. This is evident when out of the two village leaders asked how many people migrated for work, one replies “about 50 people migrated last year”, while the other replies “about 100 people migrated last year”. However, the leaders do mention the intensification of migration in years of drought, and a higher regularity in migration among landless villagers. All seasonal migrants were absent for 6 months. The migration destinations in most cases were cities in Delhi, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and the most common occupation was working in brick kilns.

Migrants interviewed from Chata were in the age range 28-45 and were all men, although the wives of 14 of the 19 male migrants interviewed (and children in 16 cases) went to the city as well. 7 out of the 19 households were landless, and all households had at least one member who had migrated in the year 2003-2004. (See Annex B (ii) for list of migrants). Interviewed households had been migrating for the past 2-8 years, and 12 households said they would continue to migrate, while 5 said they cannot tell whether they would continue or not and 2 said they would not continue. The most common reason for migration was for financial/economic gains, while the second most common reason was for better employment opportunities and increased job security as compared to those available in the village. 12 migrants expressed their greatest loss as “an inability to participate in social activities, occasions of the community, joys and sorrows of their family members”, as “an inability to be a part of the community”, or as “the experience of a lack of support from the home community they belong to”. 5 migrants said the greatest loss for them was “the inability to educate their children because of their shifting location”, 1 migrant said his greatest loss was that he “was unable to take advantage of certain government schemes in his village as a result of being away”. 1 migrant said he did not suffer any loss as a result of absence from his community. One of the two village leaders interviewed expressed a decline in moral standards as some migrants could not find jobs when they got to the cities and “fed themselves by thefts and robbery”.

The data collected from Chata village does not reveal significant differences between reactions of households with land and those without. Although women migrate on a scale

comparable with men, women migrants were not interviewed as intended. This means that neither differences in perception of effects on social capital between men and women, nor gendered effects on the social capital of men and women come out in this study. Differences in the effects on children are also not considered.

## **EFFECTS OF MIGRATION ON SOCIAL CAPITAL**

The effects of migration on social capital of the community have been assessed by asking migrants how they think migration has affected the level of trust and quality of relationships in their community, especially between migrant and non-migrant members of the community, how migration has affected their participation in community activities, and how migration has affected their being a part of the various rural networks.

### **Trust:**

13 migrants of the 19 interviewed stated that there was no change in the level of trust between them and the members of their families. 3 migrants expressed trust had decreased since they started migrating and 1 said it had increased. Regarding relationships between members of the family or the community and the migrant, 10 migrants expressed no change, while 6 said relationships were worse. Village leaders said trust in the community is not affected as “the migrants are the main residents of the village” and the community understands their obligation to go to urban areas for work.

### **Norms:**

4 of the 19 households surveyed experienced births and deaths in the year 2003-04. Of these, 2 migrants were present at the time, while 2 were not. Being absent affected the household and community in one case, and affected the migrant in both cases. None of the migrants were unable to participate in weddings, but village leaders stated that migrants face problems when it came to choosing partners for their children, as an absence from the village does not allow them to carefully think about and choose a suitable partner from the village itself, (which is preferred to a partner from elsewhere). The extended family, which can play a role in the choosing of marriage partners, does not help in cases where ties with extended family are weakened due to migration.

Most migrants leave their village after the main festival season which ends around the end of November. The major festivals migrants miss are Chera cheri, Holi and Akti, which occur in December and April, besides smaller festivals that occur between December and June. Migrants express feeling sad or sorry that they have not been able to participate in the festival celebrations. One migrant said “the gods are angry with us”. All migrants who left their families behind in the village expressed negative feelings for not being present for all festivals across the board, while in the cases where families migrated together, some migrants express negative feelings, but it did not make a difference to others that they were absent at festival times.

10 surveyed migrants participated in the state level elections, while 9 did not. However the ones who participated expressed their dissatisfaction with the performance of the elected government in providing for services and in bringing about change in governance. The 9 who did not participate did not say that they missed the elections because of migration, but because they knew their participation would not ensure better governance or improved services. This supports the view that the only benefit villagers get from elections is economic.

#### **Networks:**

The extended family seems to be the most affected among the three networks chosen to assess the participation of migrants in rural networks. Of the 19 migrants surveyed, 15 have extended family members in the village, and 4 do not. Of the 15, 14 help the members of their extended family. This is often in terms of financial help and with labor, “for example in farming and for the repair of each others’ houses”. Others express emotional support and “help in time of crisis” as benefits of being a part of an extended family. 12 of these 14 households are unable to help their extended families in years that they migrate.

Of the 19 households surveyed, 7 borrowed money and 2 borrowed land during the year 2003-04. Land was borrowed from friends and from family in both cases, while money was borrowed from family/relatives in 2 cases, friends in 2 cases, the village money lender in 2 cases, and from a government bank in 1 case. Migrants do not convey any changes in their relationships with local patrons as a result of migration. Households that borrow money, all state that they borrowed more money in years when they migrated.

Migrants as well as village leaders said that there were no village level organizations present in this village at the moment. However, a social activist of the area says that the Panchayat is the strongest local organization (see information on Panchayat in Chapter 3 for details).

When asked if the migrants wished to continue migrating for work in the dry season, 2 of them expressed a desire to continue doing so, because they learn more from working in the city. 2 said they had no choice and would therefore continue to migrate, while 7 said they would like to remain in the village if it were possible to make a decent living there, and 8 said they had no wish to migrate whatsoever. When asked if their families wished for them to continue going to the cities for work, all 19 respondents said that their families did not wish for them to migrate. All households expressed compulsion in having to migrate to varying degrees because of the non-profitability of agriculture as well as a lack of income-earning options available in the countryside or in Chhattisgarh itself.

One can conclude that migration from Chhattisgarh is seasonal in nature and is a phenomenon that occurs from many parts of Chhattisgarh (from all districts), with a particularly large number of smallholders participating in the activity. It has also been an on-going practice, and does not just occur in years of hardship or crisis, but on a regular basis, although it does increase in difficult years. Migrants come mostly from the working age group, but also consist of children and young people, as seen in Chata. Periods of absence from the village and the consequences of this for migrant households and the community can be estimated, and are highlighted in the case of Chata village through the testimonies of the migrant households and village leaders of Chata.



## **CHAPTER 5: SEASONAL MIGRATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

Having looked at the nature of social capital in rural Chhattisgarh, and at migration from this area, it is possible to analyze the ways in which the absence of members of the community resulting from migration could and does affect the migrants themselves, their households and the rural community they migrate from. This will be done in the following chapter.

Seasonal migration occurs almost equally among male and female migrants, and is concentrated in the age group of 15-45 years. The second largest age group of migrants is those below 6 years of age, which indicates that children who are too young to be left at home are taken along with working migrant parents. Thus children are also not present in the rural areas in the period during which migrants are absent. This absence from the rural community means that migrant households have poorer access to education and health facilities and are unable to participate in activities in the rural area that are of a non-social kind, such as government schemes. Thus seasonal migration has varied effects on many aspects of rural life.

### **EFFECTS OF SEASONAL MIGRATION ON SOCIAL CAPITAL**

Besides these effects on the families of migrants, there are effects on the three components of social capital looked at in this study:

#### **Effects on trust within the rural community**

Migrants remain away from their villages for part of the year: Verma and Joshi found the migrants remain away from the village for up to 250 days, (Joshi & Verma 2004, p.98), while migrants from Chata remain away from the village for 6 months. Trust between those members of the community who migrate and those who do not would be expected to diminish significantly, especially considering comments like that of the village leader who says some migrants engage in crime to earn a living. However, in the eyes of the community, the migrants are seen as “doing good” by going out to work rather than remaining idle in the village. Most migrants and the village leaders from Chata village say that the level of trust between members of a family does not change significantly

after migration. Some migrants say that they cannot tell whether levels of trust in Chata community have reduced, and three say that levels of trust have reduced, which is a small proportion of all migrants. This indicates that although migrants are away from the community for half the year, the fact that they come back every year to work in the fields and to participate in the activities of the community ensures fair maintenance of social capital in terms of trust in the rural area. As seasonal migration has been an on-going activity, villagers realize that the migrants will return for the cropping season. A migrant who has been migrating every year for the past 8 years says: “at first they (other community members) were suspicious of our leaving the village for long periods of time, but now they understand that we are going for a good reason”. Trust between individuals in the community, like a shop owner and a customer, could have deteriorated for a time, but once the situation is understood by the community, these relations function as before in the knowledge that the migrant is still an active part of the rural community. Migrants also tend to formulate gestures or actions that compensate for their absence in some way, such as giving significant individuals presents, in order to maintain the level of trust and goodwill people feel toward them.

### **Effects on compliance with norms of the rural community**

Most migrants leave the village in Dec/Jan: weddings can be fixed at a time that is convenient to all family members. Ceremonies related to births and deaths are not foreseeable and so migrants may miss out on these events. Only 2 migrants were unable to participate in the funerals of their relatives and both expressed having “felt very sad” that they could not be present. This indicates a negative effect on the ability of migrants to participate in social activities, and migrants consider this a definite loss, resulting in a loss of social capital. There is also a loss in terms of the ability of parents to find suitable marriage partners for their children due to weakened networks or due to physical absences. This could mean that a parent would have to pay a higher dowry for a daughter or would have to offer a more ‘attractive package’ (including gifts of land, a vehicle or some other asset), when presenting their son or daughter to a prospective partner, resulting in higher expenditure.

Many of the community festivals are finished by the time a majority of the migrants leave (Dec/Jan), according to the study done by Joshi and Verma. This means migrants try to

minimize the events they miss due to seasonal migration and shows an effort on the part of migrants to be present with the community and family at times of festivity and celebration. The festivals migrants miss out on are fewer than the festivals they participate in. Migrants who migrated with family were not as severely affected as those who migrated alone, which indicates a feeling of attachment to family and the need to participate in social and religious activities together. However, migrants from Chata express feeling sad or sorry when they were unable to participate in the festival celebrations. This shows the importance of being a part of community activities and celebrations and shows that individuals do feel the need to participate in these activities.

A feeling of loss due to non-participation indicates a loss within the community. Many describe the celebrations as only partially fulfilling without all members of the community or family present.

“The excitement in the family decreased”.

“Everybody celebrating it together would have added more happiness”.

Non-participation could also mean reduced ability to build useful ties with influential members of the community at these times.

Migrants who left the villages in December or earlier, would be expected to have missed the state assembly elections. Migrants from Chata express their disappointment in the fact that making a decision and voting for a certain candidate does not bring about any changes in local governance or in the facilities available to the community. Non-voters from Chata did not state having to migrate as their reason for not voting, but rather repeated dissatisfaction with governance. This indicates that seasonal migration does not have a strong impact on political activities a rural smallholder is able to engage in. A total turn-out rate of 55% for Chhattisgarh state is fairly high, and certainly on par with other states that held elections around the same time. (Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan recorded turn out rates of 55% and 60% respectively), (PTI 2003, Election Special). This could be used to indicate that there is no severe consequence of seasonal migration on social capital and the ability to act collectively or express preferences.

However, considering the monetary benefits rural households get from elections there would be considerable loss in the financial gains that would occur through useful social

networks at election times. However members of the family who remained in the village could still gain. This would indicate an economic loss rather than a loss in the ability to be a part of the rural community.

### **Effects on networks within the rural community**

Rural networks of extended families would be expected to be at a loss with fewer members of the family present during the non-cropping season. This would mean fewer workers to earn money in the village and fewer members to rely on for agricultural work, household chores and other forms of assistance. Out of the 15 migrants who have extended family living in the same village, none of them expressed a decrease in trust between members of the extended family, and many say that the members understood the need for migrants to leave the village for work. 13 migrants mentioned they could no longer help their extended family in any way because of migration. While the elements of emotional support and the pooling of labor are not lost completely, most of the migrants express some loss of these as well. Monetary help is provided in only 2 cases out of 12, who provided their extended families with money before migration, which indicates a severe effect on support that members of an extended family can give each other. The decrease in financial aid raises a question as this can be given even without physical presence in the village. A reduction in this could indicate that either migrant households earn more but also spend more and therefore have nothing left over to share with their families, or that the physical absence from the village leads to a reduction in the feeling of responsibility a migrant household has for members of their extended family. Extended family networks appear to be affected negatively by seasonal migration. The losses resulting from migration in extended family networks are both social and economic, indicating an erosion of social capital.

Patron-client relationships would be expected to suffer as patrons do not get the support they need from their clients in terms of cheap labor or political support. Families of smallholders would be expected to suffer as well, considering they do not get benefits and favors from the patron in the absence of the members of the household who normally negotiate with patrons. Also the ability to form new patron-client ties would be reduced as the absence of smallholders from the village would mean fewer interactions between potential patrons and clients and fewer opportunities to build such ties. Most migrants

from Chata expressed no change in the relationship with their patron. However they do not appear to rely so heavily on patrons for advances of financial, natural or physical capital in this village. Many borrowers of land and money appear to take advantage of other social relationships, such as friendship or neighborhood relationships for this purpose, rather than turning to patrons. However clients still rely on occasional gifts and economic benefits from patrons in exchange for political support (as described by social activist Akshay Sail in Annex C), so an absence from the village at politically sensitive periods like elections would mean fewer opportunities for smallholders to prove themselves client-worthy to desirable patrons, and thus to secure a source of access to such resources. As interactions within existing patron-client relationships reduce, the network weakens. Any loss resulting from migration would be primarily economic, with fewer implications for social loss.

Relationships between patrons and clients as landlords and tenants seem to be almost non-existent. Rather it appears that landless workers sell their labor to larger farmers when required instead of leasing land to farm themselves. This indicates a significant change in the way land ownership and access has changed in recent years. The change could be attributed partially to migration as landless households can no longer lease land since they are not present to look after it the entire year, and therefore find it more convenient to sell their labor in the peak agricultural season. This change could have, on the other hand, occurred before the increase in migration and could have played a role in triggering seasonal migration as landless workers were left with nothing to do in the non-agricultural season. However, this is a complex change in agrarian systems which could have varying causes and appears in other parts of the developing world; it was also found to have occurred in the Philippines by Benedict J T Kerkvliet for example: “besides the fact that few villagers are now tenants, landlords have diminished in importance for the remaining ones”, (Kerkvliet 1990, p.212).

Village level associations would be expected to suffer from lack of participation of members who are away from the rural community. If the members of the village Panchayat were chosen democratically, this would mean that an absence of key members of the community would lead to a more restricted choice of candidates for leadership. The leaders of Chata claim that there are no village-level associations in that village, even among members of the community who never migrate. This could indicate that, like

patron-client relationships, this type of interaction among rural individuals is declining, as people see less benefit in organizing themselves for any action. Village level associations imposed externally do occur in many villages in Chhattisgarh, and these could be affected by migration.

### **AN EROSION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL?**

An analysis of the data on social capital in rural Chhattisgarh alongside the data on migration reveals two distinct forms that effects of migration on social capital take. One is an economic form, where the economy of the migrant household or of the migrant himself, in terms of finances, labor, land or other productive assets and resources, is affected as a result of being absent from the rural area and therefore being unable to participate in certain activities and relationships due to migration. The other is a social form, where social life of the migrant household or of the migrant himself is affected as a result of being absent from certain relationships due to migration. Economic losses due to migration occur in extended family networks, patron client relationships and possibly in the fulfillment of norms of the community, for example at weddings. Social losses are apparent as a result of the inability to participate in the social and religious activities of the community as well as in extended family networks. Implied social losses can be seen in patron client relationships and village level associations.

While useful for analysis, these two forms of the effects of seasonal migration are not totally separable from each other and it may be concluded that seasonal migration does indeed lead to an erosion of social capital of migrant households and of migrants themselves, in terms of trust, in terms of compliance with the norms of the community as well as in terms of the ability to form and use rural networks, and hence of the rural community the migrant belongs to.

Seasonal migration in Chhattisgarh occurs on a large scale and in a village like Chata for example, between 5 and 10 per cent of the community is absent during the non-agricultural season. This absence coupled with other factors that increasingly affect rural communities today, result in changes in the way rural society functions in order to facilitate economic activities. A question arises as to what options are available to

smallholders in such a changing society, in order for them to still be able to form viable livelihood strategies and function within their communities.

## **CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS**

Building and maintaining social capital within the rural areas helps an individual in many ways. (S)he is able to function as a full member of the rural community and is accepted by members of that community as one of them. A smallholder in the rural community is also able to gain room for maneuver through social capital, in a situation where (s)he may not have adequate possession of other forms of capital that are necessary to build a successful livelihood portfolio. A major assumption underlying the argument in this paper, which feeds from social capital theory, is that participating in activities of the community and in its networks as well as building trust within the community through relationships with other members enables an individual to build and maintain her/his social capital in the rural community and requires physical presence in the village community. This means that the absence of an individual, caused by rural-urban seasonal migration leads to decreased social capital in the rural area as the migrant misses out on the activities, networks and relationships (s)he would normally participate in were (s)he present in the village.

### **THE EFFECTS OF SEASONAL MIGRATION ON RURAL SOCIAL CAPITAL**

An analysis of the information regarding the change in social capital of migrants in their rural communities due to seasonal migration shows that trust is affected in some cases, but is consciously maintained between most members of the community. While migrants do not miss out on all of the social, religious and political activities, they are affected by the ones they do miss, as are their households and the community which they migrate from. Apparently, migrants try to minimize the number of social and religious activities they miss out on, which would lead to a decrease in the number of days they were able to work in the urban areas, and hence the income they could bring back with them, this being the purpose of migration in the first place. Thus, one can say that there is a trade-off involved; migrants have to make a choice, to a certain extent, between earning more money and maintaining rural social capital. Political activities are not severely affected by migration.

The extended family network in rural Chhattisgarh is the most severely affected network, both in social and economic terms, while patron-client networks and village level



associations are not severely affected. However these two latter forms of networks seem to be on the decline even without a large part of the population migrating.

The inadequate capture of differences between effects on men, women and children, all of whom migrate, leaves a serious gap in this study, and looking at these differences would be an important aspect to cover.

A strong sentiment that comes out of the interviews with migrants from Chata is that they undertake migration as a necessity to supplement low and erratic agricultural incomes available in the countryside. Migrants state that their families do not wish that they migrate, and many migrants themselves do not wish to migrate. A conscious effort is made on the part of migrants to maintain trustworthiness with members, and to comply with the norms of their community. Village leaders also argue migration has an overall negative effect, despite the income it brings and should be avoided. This would suggest that migration should be curbed and that better opportunities should be made available within the countryside so that smallholders and landless laborers would not need to migrate. The negative effects on social capital that come out of this study would support this view.

However, it is essential to consider the implications of such a suggestion. Major changes in the way rural society functions are evident, especially when looking at the way networks function in rural Chhattisgarh. These changes present a challenge to smallholders, landless laborers, and to all rural people in terms of how they are able to formulate livelihood strategies, and benefit from their rural communities. Ben Fine acknowledges this change:

“We fail to recognize that the social capital on which primordial social organization depends is vanishing; we fail to recognize that societies of the future will be constructed, and that we should direct our attention to designing those social structures”, (Fine 2001, p.75).

Therefore in making suggestions for migration to be prevented, it is essential to consider what opportunities are available to rural people, especially to smallholders and landless laborers, in the face of already poor stocks of capital, shrinking availability of work and of declining social networks that did, in the past, bring access to resources or to

employment. It appears that loans of money or land are not as readily available from patrons as they used to be, or that this is no longer a viable or acceptable channel to obtain access to these resources. Long sustained organizations of rural people operating to obtain economies of scale, better working conditions, higher wages, more equal rights or other such benefits seem to be less endogenous (they often originate outside the village community, as in the case of the Panchayat or self-help groups started by NGOs), or are on the decline. Thus, small farmers are dependent on their families, friends and neighbors in times of crises or otherwise for resources, as well as for social support and fulfillment. As seen earlier, families, friends and neighbors form horizontal relations and tend to be from similar socio-economic levels in the village community, which would mean a similar asset base in most cases and these relationships would not be as helpful in terms of providing smallholders or landless workers access to resources as vertical relationships have been in the past.

At the other end of the spectrum are the proponents of migration, who argue that this activity is vital for smallholders to be able to secure a source of income independent of the countryside to supplement their meager livelihoods.

“...a livelihoods approach points in an opposing direction, namely that policies should be supportive of population mobility”.

“...[migration] is an important type of diversification...”, (Ellis 2000, p.70-73).

“... [Migration from Chhattisgarh] is not only on a large scale, but the income earned through it forms an important component of the household income for landless laborers and marginal farmers...”.

“For short-term measures...the approach should be to see that the migrating workers are helped to get a better deal and such group action and procedures are adopted by which the laborers have a better chance of selecting more remunerative work and other facilities [at migration destinations], which are not till now available to them”, (Joshi & Verma 2004, p.159).

While such views support migration strongly, it appears that they are partially informed about the effects of migration on the rural communities that migrants originate from, and more importantly do not seem to take into consideration the voice of the migrants themselves and that of their communities. Migrants and their families not only express a decline in their social capital, which they do not desire, but also a decline in their ability

to obtain forms of human capital such as education and health-care, or financial capital in the case of extended families who stop receiving money from migrant family members.

This contrast in views indicates the trade off between obtaining supplementary income and losing other forms of capital that a rural household may consider equally important, involved in opting for migration. Clearly, formulating policy for or against migration is not a simple task and would require serious deliberation around the varied effects of the activity. This study focuses on effects of seasonal migration in the rural area, but there are varied effects at the urban destination of the migrant as well, such as increased social networks, improved access to resources, knowledge and skills on the one hand, and worse living conditions, informal nature of work and social insecurity on the other. These must also be considered when thinking about policy. A lack of proper documentation is evident both in the search for secondary data as well as in the primary data, where people are found to not have a clear idea of the intensity of migration or patterns of destinations, duration and so on. Documentation would be a vital prerequisite to policy formation.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS REGARDING SEASONAL MIGRATION FROM CHHATTISGARH**

Considering the need for increased incomes, the need smallholders feel to remain in their rural communities, as well as the need to take changing aspects of rural society into account, policy makers would need to construct options that enable smallholding and landless households to obtain gainful employment all year round with minimal dependence on those channels that they previously relied on for access to resources, employment or social status which have become redundant.

Agricultural infrastructure would form a vital link in the ability of smallholders to be able to cultivate their land more efficiently and to obtain a substantial income from it. Land markets would need to be developed in the light of fewer operational landlord tenant arrangements. Well organized labor markets or sharecropping arrangements would be an alternative or a complimentary way to deal with this decline in availability of land from traditional sources. Credit, which was also traditionally obtained from money lenders, would need to be provided in a more systematic way for rural smallholders and landless workers to function. A well functioning farm or a constant source of income would

improve the economic status of a household, which in turn would give it social status, and a degree of fulfillment.

Chhattisgarh state has high potential for development in the non-farm sector thanks to its rich forests and other natural resources. If wisely developed these could provide employment to the large proportion of smallholders who have no access to irrigation facilities or to landless laborers. If migration is only undertaken because of a lack of employment opportunities or because of insecurity in employment, the non-farm economy could provide steady employment in periods of non-availability of agricultural work.

Migration should always be left as an option which smallholders and rural people can undertake if they wish to, as this has its own benefits. It should not however, be an act of last resort, in which case it becomes a forced option, with no opportunities left in the countryside.

### **Conclusion**

Seasonal migration from Chhattisgarh causes an absence of a number of members of the rural community for a part of the year, which does lead to an erosion of social capital within the rural area, both of migrants and of migrant communities to a certain extent. Policy regarding migration cannot be adequately formed without considering these losses, along with the changing society rural people are a part of in the countryside, as well as the urban story of seasonal migration, and comprehensive documentation of the phenomenon. This study presents a very small part of the wide spectrum of factors that must be taken into account when contemplating seasonal migration.

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## ANNEXES

### Annex A:

#### QUESTIONNAIRE USED TO INTERVIEW VILLAGE LEADERS:

1. Name of village:
2. What is the total population of this village?  
Total number of residents.
3. What is the main occupation of the villagers?
4. Do many people go out for work from this village during the non-cropping season?  
Yes / no
5. About how many people left the village for work last year (2003-04)?  
Approx. number of people.
6. Which is the period during the year when most people go out for work?  
Month - month.
7. Do the villagers mostly go to other rural areas for work or do they go to cities?  
If villages, which area?  
If cities, which cities?
8. Normally how long do people of this village stay away from the village for work?  
One season / one year / more than one year
9. Normally who migrates from the community/household? (Maximum migrants are...)  
Young men / Young Women / Older men / Older Women / Children / Other (specify)
10. Do you think the people who go out for work lose out on community life in terms of participation in social, religious and political activities?  
Yes / No (please elaborate)
11. What are the consequences of villagers being away from their community at the time of these social religious and political activities?  
(please elaborate)
12. Do you think the relationships of migrants with others in the village community are affected because of migration?  
Yes / No  
If yes: Do you think relationships with family are affected?  
Do you think relationships with members of community are affected?  
Do you think relationships with patrons and leaders are affected?  
In what way? (please elaborate)
13. Do you think people of the community trust the migrants in the same way as they did before?  
Yes / no (please elaborate)



14. What village level organizations are functioning in the village at present? What are their activities?  
Names of organizations  
Activities of organizations
15. Do you think the activities of these organizations contribute to the social and economic development of your village?  
If yes, in what way?  
If no, why not?
16. Does participation by the villagers in the activities of these organizations contribute to the development of your village?  
If yes, in what way?  
If no, why not?
17. How is participation in these organizations affected for people who go out to work?  
Affected / not affected (please elaborate)
18. If migrants are not able to participate in the activities of these organizations who does it affect the most?  
Affects the migrant / Affects the organization / Affects both / Does not affect anyone.
19. Overall, do you think temporary migration from the village for work is a good thing?  
If yes, why?  
If no, why not?
20. What do you suggest to improve the present situation?

**Annex B (i):**

QUESTIONNAIRE USED TO INTERVIEW MIGRANTS:

1. Name of Village:
2. Respondent: Male / Female
3. What is your age?  
\_\_\_\_\_ years old.
4. Who all live in your household?  
Members of family:
5. Does your family cultivate your own land here in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of village)?  
Yes / No
6. How long do you go to the city to work at one stretch for?  
One Season / One Year / Longer than one year.
7. How many years have you been going to the city to work for?  
\_\_\_\_\_ years.
8. Did you go to the city for work in the year 2003-04?  
Yes / No.
9. Which members of your family went to the city for work during that year?  
State the main position in the family you live in: father / mother / son / daughter / daughter (son) -in-law / mother (father) -in-law / other (please specify):
10. Did you go to the city for work in this year (2004-05)?  
Yes / No
11. Do you plan to go to the city for work in the next year (2005-06)?  
Yes / No
12. What is the biggest reason for you to go to the city for work?  
Financial gains / Secure employment / Better opportunities for health and education / Other reason (please specify):
13. What has been the biggest disadvantage of going to the city to work for you?  
Health problems / Poor access to services / Lack of social activities and contact / Other (please specify):
14. Were there any special occasions in your family or in your community during the last year (2003-04)? (Birth, Death or Wedding)  
What is your relation to person who was born, died or got married?  
No of births: Relation:  
No of Deaths: Relation:  
No of weddings: Relation:

15. Did you fail to participate in any of these occasions because you were in the city?  
Yes  
If no, how did you manage to participate?
16. Did your absence on these occasions make any difference to your family or to your community?  
If yes, in what way?  
If no, why not?
17. Did your absence on these occasions make any difference to you?  
If yes, in what way?  
If no, why not?
18. Which festivals and special pujas were you unable to celebrate because you were in the city?  
Names of festivals / poojas:
19. Did your absence at the celebrations make a difference to your family or community?  
If yes, in what way?  
If no, why not?
20. Did your absence at the celebrations make a difference to you?  
If yes, in what way?  
If no, why not?
21. Did you participate in the state level elections held in Chhattisgarh in 2004?  
a.) If yes, was it useful for you to participate?  
b.) If no, do you think it would have been good for you and your family/community if you were present at the time?
22. How many members of your extended family live in this village?  
Number of members:  
Relation to members:
23. What do you do for members of your extended family when you are in the village? (What is your role in you extended family?)
24. Is it possible to do these activities if you are working in the city?  
If yes, in what way?  
If no, why not?
25. Does it make a difference to your relationship with your extended family if you work in the city, and are not present in the village for part of the year?  
If yes, in what way?  
If no, why not?
26. Do you have borrowed land or borrowed money?  
Land / Money / Both / Neither
27. Who do you borrow land or money from?  
LAND: Family member / Friend / Landlord / Government / Other (please specify)  
MONEY: Family Member / Friend / Village Money Lender / Bank / Other (please specify)

28. Do you have to borrow more or less land and money if you go to the city for work?  
More / Less  
Why?
29. Does going to the city change your relationship with your landlord/moneylender?  
Yes / No  
In what way?
30. Does your landlord/moneylender treat you differently after you started going to the city for work?  
Yes / No  
How?
31. What village-level organizations are there in your village? What do they do?  
Name of 2 or 3 village level organizations you are familiar with and their work:
32. Do you participate in them?  
Regularly / Often / Once in a while / Never
33. What do you gain from participating in them?
34. Is your participation affected if you go to the city for work?  
If yes, how?  
If no, why not?
35. Does this effect on your participation affect you? Affect your group/organization?  
Affects me, how?  
Affects the group/organization, how?
36. Do you think members of your family (nuclear and extended) trust you?  
Yes / No
37. Do you think members of your community trust you?  
Yes / No
38. Do you think people of your family/community trust you less or more since you have gone to the city for work?  
More, why?  
Less, why?
39. Do you think your relations with your family and with your community in the village are better or worse after you started going to the city?  
Better, how?  
Worse, why?
40. Do you wish to continue going to the city for work every year?  
Yes / No
41. Does your family/community wish that you continue to go to the city for work every year?  
Yes / No

**Annex B(ii):**

LIST OF RESPONDENTS (TO QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MIGRANTS):

(All respondents were male, but some migrated with family, which means that women from these households also migrated).

|    | Name                | Age in years | Smallholder or landless | Migrated with family or alone |
|----|---------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1  | Prem Lal Khadia     | 35           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 2  | Raja Ram            | 40           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 3  | Firhat Barhiya      | 36           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 4  | Ghorau Barhiya      | 40           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 5  | Chote Lal Singh     | 40           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 6  | Akti Ram Barhiya    | 32           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 7  | Kartik Ram          | 40           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 8  | Chotu Chauhan       | 40           | Smallholder             | Migrated alone                |
| 9  | Kanhiya             | 28           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 10 | Guddu Ram           | 45           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 11 | Nand Kumar          | 34           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 12 | Kripa Ram           | 35           | Smallholder             | Migrated with family          |
| 13 | Akti Ram Khadia     | 30           | Landless                | Migrated with family          |
| 14 | Bhushan Lal Barhiya | 28           | Landless                | Migrated alone                |
| 15 | Pardesi Khadia      | 36           | Landless                | Migrated with family          |
| 16 | Baisakhu Ram Barhiy | 40           | Landless                | Migrated with family          |
| 17 | Anke Ram Seedar     | 35           | Landless                | Migrated with family          |
| 18 | Jeth Ram            | 35           | Landless                | Migrated with family          |
| 19 | Raghu Chauhan       | 45           | Landless                | Migrated with family          |

## Annex C:

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS PROVIDED BY AKSHAY SAIL (SOCIAL ACTIVIST WORKING IN MAHASAMUND DISTRICT OF CHHATTISGARH FOR THE LAST 8 YEARS):  
(SEPTEMBER 2005, MAHASAMUND, CHHATTISGARH).

The villagers have over the years accepted migration as a reality and as they have been the neglected community for a very long period hence they just consider it to be their fate and they don't even reflect as to what is social loss that they suffer.

The main aim of participating in elections whether it the state assembly elections or the National elections is to basically make as much monetary gains as possible. They are well aware of the fact that once the elections are over the public representative is not going to spare anytime for them.

The whole socio-political environment is such that even though the struggling labour class is aware that their misery is because of the policies of the ruling class but majority of them don't even want to demand that the Government start development work so that the people of Chhattisgarh don't have to migrate.

At an average more than 10 Lakh (10,00,000) labourers migrate from Chhattisgarh every year in search of work. They are not only landless labourers but also include marginal and small scale farmers.

### AKTI FESTIVAL:

One of the major festivals of Chhattisgarh is Akti – it marks the beginning of the farming season. Every family of the village bring one handful of rice that they had grown last year and mix it. After the priest has offered pray on the mixed rice every one takes one handful of the mixed rice and grow it on the best piece of land that they have. It denotes the fearless exchange of our resource claiming community ownership over them in an era of monopoly. For the past 3 years Chhattisgarh Seed Satyagrah has been observing Akti Festival as a day to re-establish people's ownership over our natural resources.

The State Assembly elections were held in December 2003.

The surveyors were unable to understand the questions regarding the village level organization and hence were unable to relate it with the Panchayat. As a result you will find that question no. 31 to 35 are blank.

The most effective village level organization present in the village structure is the Panchayat which gives them some control over the functioning of their village. Initially the panchayats were dominated by the economically powerful people but slowly the trend is changing. Today you will come across many examples where the Panchayat elections have been won by the working class. This has ensured that certain changes are visible but one must realize that the whole system is corrupt to the core and more often that not we find that the elected member of the working class is peddling the agenda of the capitalist class.

Migration in large numbers, especially of the working class results that there participation in the functioning of the panchayat system is further marginalized. Participating in the Panchayat gives the powerless some sense of power. There have been encouraging instances where the Panchayat has been successful in mobilizing the village to safeguard their interests. For example the Panchayat of Birkoni (a village near mahsamund) passed a resolution against the government's plan of setting up of industries on their vacant village land. After a long struggle the villagers won in the end. Thus on one hand we come across random instances where the Panchayat has really been able to empower the powerless but largely it is being used as an government sanctioned body to empower the loot of the natural resources and implement the policies of the MNCs.

Members of the extended family help each other in all the work – farming, household chores, religious functions, etc. Migration breaks the support & security net that the members of an extended family & society enjoy.

**Annex D:**

THE HINDU CALENDAR:

| Month      | Number of days | Commencement date |
|------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Chaitra    | 30 / 31*       | March 20 / 21*    |
| Vaisakha   | 31             | April 21          |
| Jyaistha   | 31             | May 22            |
| Asadha     | 31             | June 22           |
| Shravana   | 31             | July 23           |
| Bhadra     | 31             | August 23         |
| Asvina     | 30             | September 23      |
| Kartika    | 30             | October 23        |
| Agrahayana | 30             | November 22       |
| Pausa      | 30             | December 22       |
| Magha      | 30             | January 21        |
| Phalgun    | 30             | February 20       |

## Annex E:

### OCCURRENCE OF FESTIVALS CELEBRATED IN CHHATTISGARH DURING THE HINDU YEAR:

| Festival            | Brief description of festival   | Dates    |
|---------------------|---|----------|
| Ram Navmi           | Commemorates birth of Lord Rama. Celebrations include procession to a river and floats of deities. Also pilgrimage to Ayodhya and Pondicherry.  | Chaitra  |
| Baisakhi            | Hindu New Year, Celebrations include ritual bathing at holy rivers, special poojas and festive activities.  |          |
| Akthi               | Agricultural festival, held to worship seeds (rice) brought by farmers from all over Chhattisgarh. The seeds are then mixed together and shared. One of the most auspicious days for getting married. | Vaisakha |
| Arwa Teej           | Festival of unmarried girls in preparation for marriage. Dancing, food and festivity take place.  | Vaisakha |
| Matha Pahunchni     |   | Asadha   |
| Hareli              | Agricultural festival, held to worship cows, ploughs and other agricultural implements and <i>poojas</i> for a bountiful harvest are made.  | Shravana |
| Saavanahi           | Festival of fasts lasting for many days when homage is paid to deities in return for health, wealth, happiness and children.  | Shravana |
| Raksha Bandhan      | Festival of bonding between brother and sister, where brother promises to protect his sister(s). Great festivity, dancing and food.   | Shravana |
| Athe Gokul          |   | Bhadra   |
| Krishna Janmashtami |   | Bhadra   |
| Teeja               | This festival is celebrated by women and is set apart as a day of prayer for her husband. Married women go to the home of their parents, and get a chance to meet their own families.                 | Bhadra   |
| Poora (Pola)        | Worship of bullocks used for agriculture. Bulls are washed, given special treatment and food. A procession of bullocks is led by farmers through streets of the village.                              | Bhadra   |
| Ganeesh Chathurthi  |   | Bhadra   |
| Pither              |   | Asvina   |
| Navakhai            | This festival marks the beginning of the rice harvest. A special meal is cooked from the first fruit of the harvest   | Asvina   |



|                                  |   |                           |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
|                                  | and enjoyed with family and neighbors.  |                           |
| Dashera (Navratri)               | A ten-day-long festival where a goddess is worshiped for nine nights with dancing and <i>poojas</i> , and victory over evil is proclaimed on the tenth day when celebrations reach their height.              | Asvina                    |
| Diwali                           | The festival of lights. Celebrated with a lot of festivity, lighting of lamps and fireworks, often accompanied with buying of new clothes, jewellery and other articles.                                      | Kartika                   |
| Bhai Dooj                        | Brothers in a household are revered through a ritual and they give gifts to their sisters. For adults, this means that married women go back to the home of their parents in order to be with their brothers. | Kartika                   |
| Devutani                         |   | Kartika                   |
| Chercher Poash Poornima (Charta) | A harvest festival celebrated with rituals and a meal with family , friends and neighbors; youngsters of the community play a major role in these celebrations.   | Pausa                     |
| Mela                             | An annual fair held in the city of Rajim, often involves going to the sacred city for celebration and displays of culture and heritage.   | Magha                     |
| Holi                             | The festival of colors. Celebrated with bonfire night followed by a day of unrestrained festivity and splashing of color with family, friends and neighbors.  | Phalguna                  |
| Guru Ghansidas Jayanti           | Celebrated in memory of Guru Ghasidas, a social reformer in Chhattisgarh, and respected especially for his teachings of the <i>satnam panth</i> .   | 18 <sup>th</sup> December |

## Annex F:

### ROLE OF PANCHAYAT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

**Panchayat responsibilities.** The 11 schedule of the 73rd amendment specifies 29 areas of responsibility that states may devolve to the panchayats. *Note: areas marked in bold are areas where independent observers have indicated that women bear primary responsibility.*

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agriculture, including agricultural extension</li> <li>2. Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation</li> <li>3. Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development</li> <li>4. Animal husbandry, dairy and poultry</li> <li>5. Fisheries</li> <li>6. Social forestry and farm forestry</li> <li>7. Minor forest produce</li> <li>8. Small scale industries, including food processing industries</li> <li>9. Khadi (homespun cloth), village and cottage industries</li> </ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural housing</li> <li>• Drinking water</li> <li>• Fuel and fodder</li> <li>• Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication</li> <li>• Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity</li> <li>• Non-conventional energy sources</li> <li>• Poverty alleviation programmes</li> <li>• Education including primary and secondary schools</li> <li>• Technical training and vocational education</li> <li>• Adult and non-formal education</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Libraries</li> <li>• Cultural activities</li> <li>• Markets and fairs</li> <li>• Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries</li> <li>• Family welfare</li> <li>• Women and child development</li> <li>• Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded</li> <li>• Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes</li> <li>• Public distribution system</li> <li>• Maintenance of community assets</li> </ul> |
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(Panchayati Raj, 2005)