



PATTERNS OF OUT-MIGRATION FROM RURAL AREAS: A CASE STUDY OF PURBA MEDINIPUR DISTRICT

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Abstract: *Out-migration can take place due to various reasons indicating movement of people mostly due to economic and cultural factors. This study delved into an investigation to understand the trends in out-migration from rural areas of Purba Medinipur. To achieve its aim, the study incorporated high-quality secondary data sources such as West Bengal government's official websites, independent journals, open-access databases and peer-reviewed research works. Findings of the paper suggested that people from rural areas of Purba Medinipur mostly out-migrate due to employment vulnerabilities and unstable income due to flood and changing land use in the areas of Egra I, Nandigram II and Khejuri I. Other causes include poor educational and healthcare infrastructure which influence the pattern of out-migration.*

Key Words: *Out-migration, Rural, Urban, Population, Trends, Livelihood.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of migration is widely discussed because of its impact on individuals as well as its overall social, economic, and political consequences. Based on census 2011, about 37% of the Indian population has changed their home while almost 38.1% West Bengal's population has migrated from other states in the last 10 years (Hossain et al., 2023). Predominantly, female migrators are observed to change their place of residence frequently from rural to rural places as compared to men who mostly migrated from rural to urban locations for economic purposes.

In Purba Medinipur, migration takes place mostly from rural to urban areas which is often addressed as intra-state out-migration. These instances of migration are mostly motivated by economic factors such as poverty and lack of employment opportunities due to high population pressure, trade, industry and commerce (Wilton, 2021). Push factors that force people to migrate, generally from rural to urban areas include unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, poverty and natural disasters. Conversely, urban areas offering better living conditions, higher educational opportunities and employment people attract people with pull factors. For instance, a rapid surge in urban population (from 8.29% to 11.63%) is seen between 2001 and 2011 in Purba Medinipur (Bhunias, 2022). It is found that Purba Medinipur receives Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme (BRGF) funding and its poverty rate is 8.60% (Department of Industry, Commerce & Enterprises, Government of West Bengal, 2022). Therefore, the increase in urban population can be attributed to financial backwardness which drives local people to migrate to urban areas for better earning opportunities. However, an in-depth analysis of the reasons is required to develop an all-inclusive overview of the patterns of out-migration in the district. Patterns of out-migration include seasonal migration where agricultural labourers move from their residential area during the seasons of harvesting or sowing. Additionally, construction workers also migrate seasonally. When migrators permanently change their residential location for educational, marital and employment purposes, it is referred to as permanent migration (Census, 2011). People of Purba Medinipur also engage in circular migration where they intermittently move from their residential place to the place of migration without settling permanently.



Migration can impact both positively and negatively. In terms of a positive impact, remittances sent by migrants back home improve the local economic conditions to some extent. Life prospects of the migrants improve as they avail better educational, cultural learning and earning opportunities. Additionally, returning migrants bring new skills, savings and contacts often widening the opportunity for local industries to grow. However, migration can impact negatively by disrupting family structures. Migration drives urbanization which results in deforestation and affects the natural ecosystem contributing to environmental degradation. Apart from that, overcrowding in urban areas causes resource scarcity, a surge of slum areas, and pressure on public services, while underpopulation leads to poor availability of labourers in other areas.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Debnath & Nayak (2022). Remittances significantly influence the usual livelihood of families of migrating workers. Debnath & Nayak (2022) conducted a study on the socio-economic changes in the households of the male out-migrants of the Rarh region in Bankura, West Bengal which is frequently affected by drought. Particularly, it focuses on the differential impacts of access to landholding. A structured household schedule has been used for data collection from 185 households. To determine the association between the amount of remittances and socio-economic determinants, a “logistic regression” model was applied. Therefore, the nature of work taken or availability of work apart from skills and other factors influence the size of the remittances. The findings of the study revealed that while some migrant households used the remittances received only for one purpose; most of them used it for various purposes. Majorly, the remittances are used for repaying loans taken before their male family members migrated as well as for food consumption. Moreover, the study finds that outmigration helped these households to survive the impacts of chronic poverty while other households with somewhat better economic conditions used the remittances to improve their livelihood.

Gupta, (2022). As per the author, Indigenous Knowledge System helps individuals to provide improve public service in parallel with contemporary knowledge system. It could be observed that when people are forced to out-migrate or in-migration increases, this IKS is altered. Changes in the mode of production is a major cause behind this issue. Specifically, the author studied the Duars region in India which holds the characteristics of a transnational location as it was included from Bhutan Himalayas. As a result, this region had to lose its trade routes forcing indigenous people of the area to earn livelihood from Koch Bihar and Kamtapur. These people including Mech, Rabha, Koch and Garo tribal communities were integrated together into the agrarian Rajbanshi caste. The resulting altered knowledge system underwent identity movement and entered into multiculturalism. As per the study, multiculturalism resulting from this alteration and mixing of knowledge contributed to trade and economy of the region.

The balance of migration is determined by the number of people moving in into a state/territory compared to leaving the territory over a specific time-period; it is also referred to as “net migration”. A negative net migration indicates that residents (based on place of last residence or POLR) are engaging in out-migration. The net intercensal migration in West Bengal accounted for -98,328 in 2011 census (Census, 2011). One of the most significant reasons behind this include rapid reduction in income and lack of new ways of income generation. This is predicted to continue for subsequent decades due to negative interstate migration data as well. The study concludes that migration within the state took place during 1980s-1990s on the basis of pull factors of high-income states. Mostly, employment has been a concern due to which people migrated from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha during 2000s. West Bengal’s rural unemployment rate is higher than any other state after 2010s. The economic growth of the state is largely affected by the reduced sectoral employment and negative elasticity of growth in the sector of agriculture.

3. OBJECTIVES :

1. To identify the demographic profile of out-migrants in study area.
2. To analyze the nature and direction of migration in Purba Medinipur.
3. To examine the "Push" and "Pull" factors in my study area.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

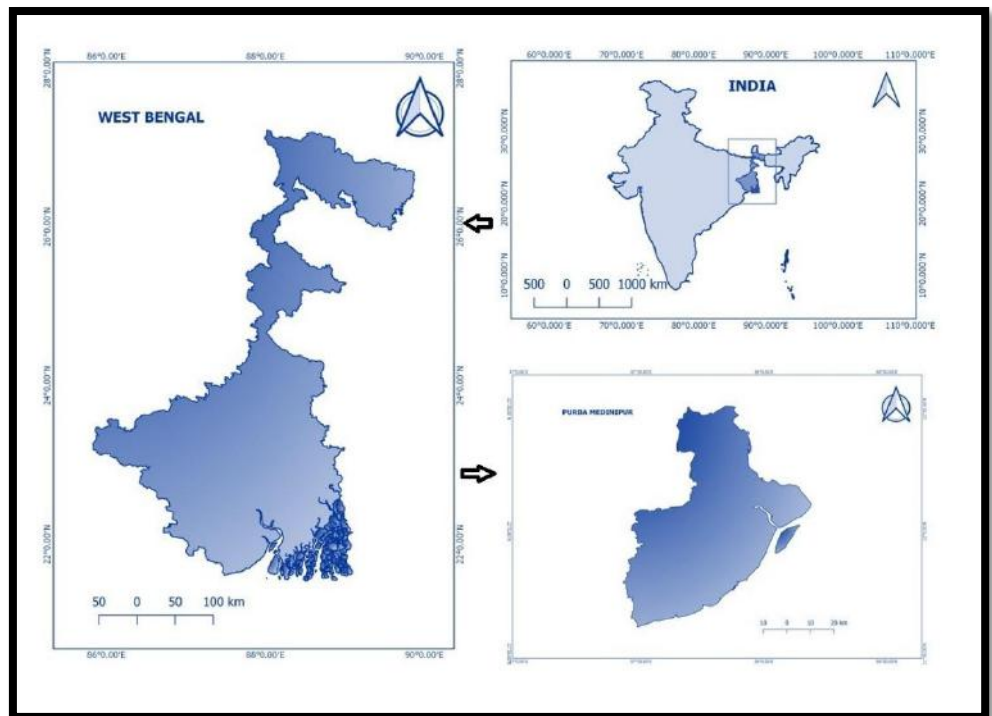
The Study Area Selection



Purba Medinipur is selected as the study location for this paper. This district is located in the southeastern part of West Bengal. In terms of latitude this district lies between 21°36' N to 22°57' N and longitude wise it is located between 86°33' E and 88°12' E. Purba Medinipur covers a 4,736 km² area in total. Odisha state is located in its southwest border, Paschim Medinipur in its West, Howrah and South 24 Paraganas in its north and the Bay of Bengal in its south.

Approximately, 87% of the total population in Purba Medinipur resides in rural areas. As per census 2011, Purba Medinipur witnessed a surge of population in its urban areas by 2.3 million. In this study, the reasons, important locations in

terms of movements of workers and nature of those movements are studied. The district belongs to the Eastern Coastal Plains which are mainly known for alluvial soil and flat terrain.



Selection of Data Sources

The study, depending on its aim, utilizes secondary sources providing information regarding out-migration in Purba Medinipur from rural areas. To achieve the same, this research uses a “bottom up” approach to collect existing data and identify trends of migration to draw conclusions. It incorporates the government’s official, open-access district-level data sources. These data sources include Census of India – Migration Data (2011), District statistical handbook, NSSO Reports on Migration and Employment, and “West Bengal Human Development Report”. Apart from that, scholarly thesis and research works such as from the World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews were used as data sources in the study. Quantitative data would improve the objectivity of the research by maintaining consistency of the results. Moreover, quantitative data is dependable or reliable as it helps drawing more accurate conclusions compared to qualitative data which is mostly based on subjective observation.

5. RESULTS & DISCUSSION:

I. Demographic profile of Purba Medinipur

Indicator	Total Population (2001)	Total Population (2011)	Population Increased by
Population	4,417,377	5,095,875	15.36%
Urban	3,66,145	5,92,714	11.63%
Rural	4,051,232	4,503,161	10.72%
Male	2,268,322	2,629,834	16.01%
Female	2,149,055	2,466,041	15.03%

Table 1: Population Distribution in Rural and Urban Areas of Purba Medinipur

Source:

As per census 2011, the population of Purba Medinipur is 5,095,875 among which 4,503,161 resides in rural area. While the urban population has increased by 11.63%, rural population increased by only 10.72% from 2001 to 2011. Notably, from 2001, although rural population has significantly increased, the percentage reflects a disproportionate increase in urban population in 2011 (Census, 2011). This finding can be ascribed to the out-migration from rural areas. However, considering the various nature of migration such as seasonal migration, rural-rural migration, and other factors, a detailed analysis is required.



II. Migration Prone Areas in Purba Medinipur

Nandigram II, Egra I and Khejuri I are mostly prone to migration to urban areas. The causes behind migration proneness of these blocks are as discussed below.

a. Nandigram II

Poverty appears as the most vital factor while discussing the reasons for migration from rural areas of Purba Medinipur. Particularly, Nandigram II indicates high financial deprivation levels among other blocks of Purba Medinipur. According to the “District Human Development Report”, in Modified Human Poverty Index (MHPI), Nandigram II scores 30.41 which is significantly higher than the district average of 24.78 (NITI Aayog, 2023). This can be attributed to the historical socio-political unrest during land acquisition movements in 2000s. This has influenced the migration patterns and continues to influence livelihood of the people in this area.

b. Egra I

Egra faces severe environmental issues affecting the lands used for agricultural purposes forcing people to migrate for income opportunities. Agricultural challenges mostly contribute to out-migration from Egra I as it is the commonest economic activity of local people. Moreover, attempts of urbanization such as development of administrative facilities, formation of Egra municipality changed the pattern of land use reducing agricultural fallow land. Approximately, 75% of Egra is covered by “Dubda Basin” (Duari, 2017). Natural land converted built-up area caused agricultural land to shrink affecting the livelihood of local people who were dependent on farming. Apart from that, this area is prone to seasonal flooding which also creates income barrier causing people to migrate for more reliable source of earning.

c. Khejuri I

Poor levels of agricultural development are a major cause of limited employment opportunities in agricultural land and cultivation. According to Sau (2018), Khejuri is a least developed areas among other blocks based on the net sown area, irrigated area, intensity of cropping, use of fertilizers and ploughing tractor usage. As the block is majorly dependent on farming and agriculture, these losses of employment opportunities and scope of earning forces people to migrate from this block to other areas.

III. Employment Prospects

a. Distribution of Marginal workers – Purba Medinipur (Census 2011):

An analysis of the rural-urban marginal workers composition based on census 2011 data, offers an understanding of the labor vulnerability and causes of out-migration from the rural areas. The percentages of marginal workers in rural and urban areas of Purba Medinipur are as presented below.

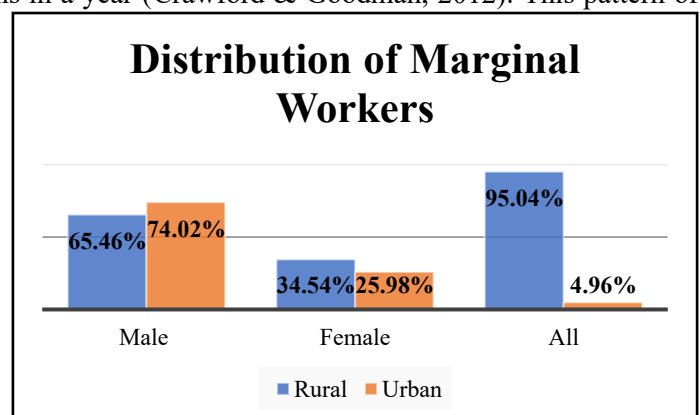
Area Type	Total Marginal Workers	Male Workers	Female Workers	Percentage of Male	Percentage of Female	Percentage of Total (All)
All	783,008	515,893	267,115	65.89%	34.11%	100.00%
Rural	744,208	487,175	257,033	65.46%	34.54%	95.04%
Urban	38,800	28,718	10,082	74.02%	25.98%	4.96%

Table 2: Marginal Workers in Purba Medinipur

Source: (Census, 2011)

As presented in table 2, 95% of the marginal workers belong from rural areas. Marginal workers are referred to people having work opportunity for less than 183 days or 6 months in a year (Crawford & Goodman, 2012). This pattern of employment significantly affects financial stability jeopardizing their livelihood. Gender disparity also can be observed from the data, as over 34% of females in rural areas are identified as marginal workers compared to 25.98% females in urban areas. This indicates that a large number of female workers participate in low-paying or seasonal work which increases the tendency to distress migration mostly from unstable livelihood.

Additionally, work participation is also highly contrasting indicating 74% of male share. However, this can be attributed to male-domination in the construction and





temporary work. Based on the observable high rural marginal worker base, it can be concluded that lack of work opportunity acts as a push factor for rural out-migration.

b. Distribution of Marginal Cultivators and Agricultural Laborers - Purba Medinipur (Census 2011)

Area Type	Total Cultivators	Percentage of Total Marginal Cultivators	Percentage of Male Cultivators	Percentage of Female Cultivators	Percentage of Marginal agricultural laborers
All	1,03,426	13.21%	66.56%	33.44%	54.28%
Rural	1,01,274	12.93%	66.37%	33.63%	53.10%
Urban	2,152	0.27%	75.56%	24.44%	1.18%

Table 3: Distribution of Marginal Cultivators and Agricultural Laborers

The data shows that 54% of the marginal workers are agricultural laborers. As identified earlier, due to flooding in coastal areas like Egra I and Khejuri I potential for production of the agricultural lands is often compromised. These marginal workers, therefore, experience vulnerability towards seasonal unemployment and low income. On the other hand, marginal cultivators are workers putting labor on small, insecure landholdings comprising 13% of the total marginal workers. This population is also vulnerable to unstable agricultural income leading to distress migration. Therefore, in both scenarios, rural agrarian stress could be identified as a central contributor to out-migration in Purba Medinipur.

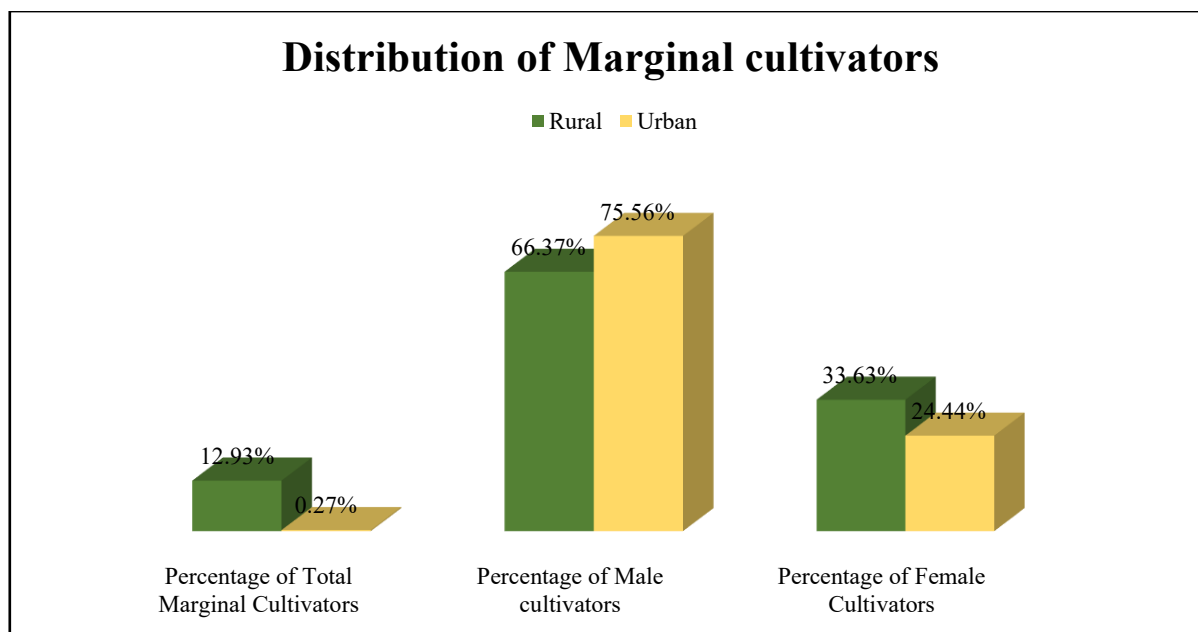


Figure 1: Marginal Cultivators

Gender gap in income generation is also visible in this context. Only 31-33% female comprise the marginal farm work involvement which can be attributed to limited mobility compared to male workers. Therefore, gender-selective migration is identifiable in both rural and urban area while out-migration is primarily caused due to poor living condition due to flooding and poor employment opportunities resulting from poor agricultural development and scope.

IV. Educational Opportunities

a. Literacy

Indicator	Rural	Urban
Literacy Rate	86.81%	88.60%
Male Literacy	92.24%	92.90%
Female Literacy	81.03%	83.95%
% of District Population	88.37%	11.63%

Table 4: Literacy Rate



Source: (Census, 2011)

The literacy rate comparison between rural and urban areas of Purba Medinipur reveals education driven migration. While Purba Medinipur shows reasonable educational efficiency more than other district in West Bengal, the rural areas are only preferable for secondary education.

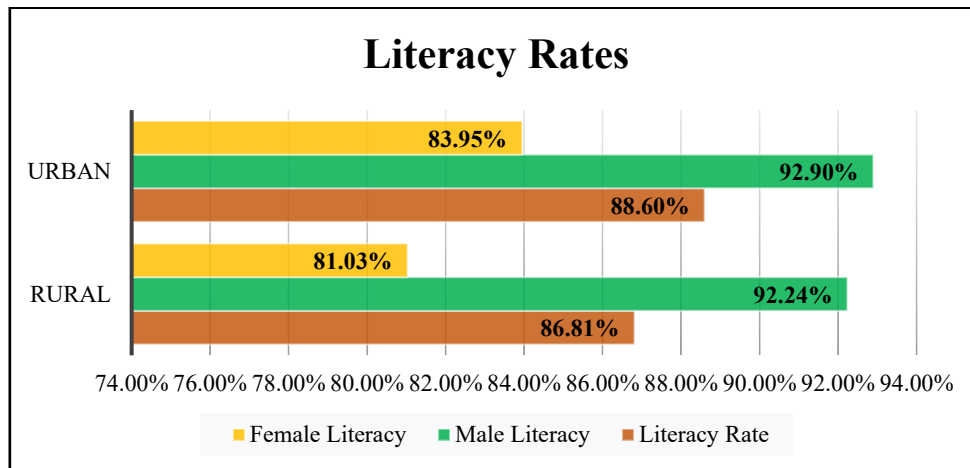


Figure 2: Literacy Rates

According to the “Development & Planning Department Government of West Bengal” (2017), higher studies aspirants mostly migrate to Tamruk and Contai for pursuing degrees in higher studies. This is because secondary educational infrastructure in rural and urban areas are well-developed. However, students from rural areas migrate to urban areas mostly for pursuing higher studies such as graduation and post-graduation. Therefore, education drivers cause rural people of Purba Medinipur to out-migrate to urban areas.

V. Healthcare Infrastructure

Indicators	Rural	Urban	Total
Population, 2011	4,503,161	5,92,714	5,095,875
Total No. of beds (in 2018)	1,019	4,114	5133
Population served per bed (in 2018)	4,419	144	993

Table 5: Healthcare Infrastructure in Rural and Urban Areas

Another significant cause of out-migration from rural areas of Purba Medinipur is poor healthcare infrastructure. As shown in the data, healthcare institutions are often unable to provide services to service seekers due to lack of sufficient beds and equipment. The “World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews” indicates a significant inter-block disparity causing unavailability of basic healthcare infrastructure (Sasmal & Rout, 2023). This contributes to migration due to population pressure and unavailability of necessary services.

VI. Areas with Highest Number of Pull Factors

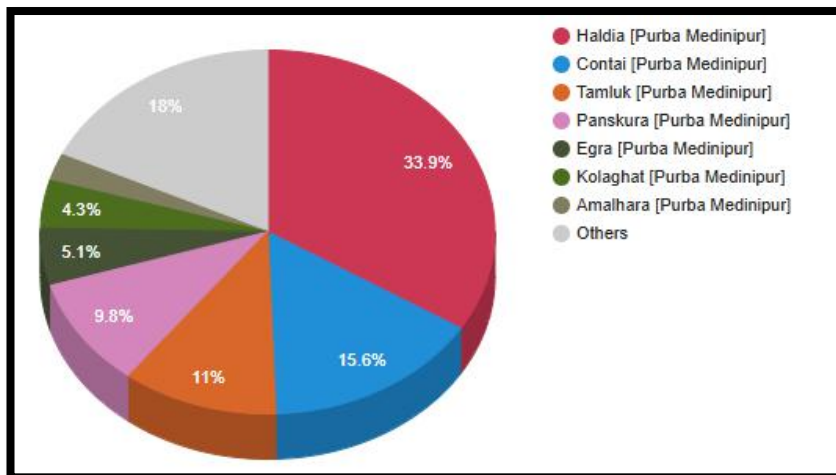


Figure 3: Population Density

a. Haldia Municipality:

Haldia Municipality is densely populated due to economic, educational and infrastructural reasons. Residents of Purba Medinipur from rural areas mostly migrate to Haldia primarily for employment opportunities (Bera, 2019).

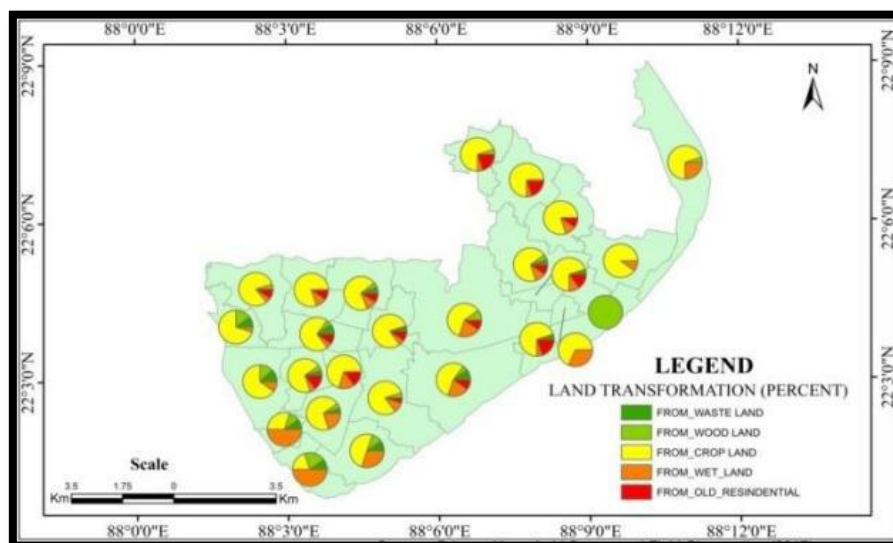


Figure 4: Changing Land Use Pattern in Haldia
 Source: (Bera, 2019)

The changing land use pattern indicates rapid urbanization, development of road, railway for improved transportation. Additionally, urban centers in Haldia witnessed establishment of water pipeline, increased electricity distribution and healthcare institutions which appeared as a pull factor for rural people. Haldia is a major port city that witnessed the most significant industrial development after 1991 including the development of numerous factories, refineries and petrochemical complexes. The resulting new job opportunities led to a population surge from 170,673 in 2001 to 200,827 in 2011 in the municipality, a large portion of which can be attributed to migration (Tripathi, 2019).

b. Contai Municipality

Contai is a sub-divisional headquarter and the 2nd most populated municipality in Purba Medinipur after Haldia with a population density of 6472 per sq. Km (Tripathi, 2022). Urban amenities are a major factor that attracts people from rural areas where these amenities are less accessible. Additionally, Contai presents a diverse range of occupational opportunities ranging from formal sector jobs, informal sector jobs as well as service-orientated occupations suiting various skills and qualifications. Apart from that, fishing and cashew processing are significant parts of the local



livelihood which act as pull factors for people with irregular work and disrupted agricultural works in rural areas (Government of West Bengal, 2025). Therefore, people from rural areas are likely to migrate in Contai for most economic reasons.

c. Tamluk Municipality

Tamluk has seen an increasing number of slum huts in last few decades. Migration is a significant cause of the formation of slum huts. According to Maity (2013), about 8.33% of the migrants are from other states, while 91.67% migrators came from only 40 kilometers distance. 50% of the migrating people moved to Tamluk in search of work. Other part of the population came for educational purposes as Tamluk has the highest concentration of educational institutions compared to other urban centers.

6. CONCLUSION:

To sum up, the pattern of rural out-migration in Purba Medinipur shows that people majorly engage in distress migration. The most significant cause of migration includes unemployment or unstable income. Another important cause includes environmental impact such as flooding which makes coastal areas ineffective for living. Although urban areas represent greater number of employment opportunity and improved livelihood, there is significant gender disparity affecting the female workers. Other causes of migration include lack of higher educational opportunities and a lack of basic healthcare infrastructure.

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