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# Out Migration from Uttarakhand: Issues and Challenges an Overview

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**ABSTRACT:** Uttarakhand since its inception is posed with many developmental challenges. One of the predominant issues hindering development has been the tough challenging mountainous terrain of a significantly very large geographical area of the state and scattered population in these regions. Post its formation, Uttarakhand has witnessed out-migration as a prominent trend, resulting in population declines in remote rural districts and sluggish or nearly no development in the hilly areas. This issue is emphasized by the fact that from 2001 to 2011, the rural population of the state decreased by 7%, while the urban population increased by nearly 35%, twice the state's average growth rate. The out-migration carries substantial economic, social, and political implications, and therefore necessitates government intervention.

This article, explores the extent of human migration from Uttarakhand hilly regions. It delves into the causes of out-migration as well. Lack or absolute shortage of livelihood opportunities in their places of origin drives most people for out migration. From a policy standpoint, boosting the economic base, focusing on niche activities, and improving educational and healthcare infrastructure can help mitigate out-migration from Uttarakhand. Notably, employment, education, and healthcare in other parts of the country have emerged as the pivotal factors shaping migration decisions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Uttarakhand is administratively divided into two regions, comprising 13 districts, 102 tehsils, 95 development blocks, 670 nyaay panchayats, and 7,950-gram panchayats. Among the 13 districts in the state, 4 districts (Dehradun, Udham Singh Nagar, Haridwar, and Nainital) are classified as plain areas, while the remaining districts are characterized as hilly regions. Geographically, it shares its borders with China and Nepal while being adjacent to Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana. The establishment of Uttarakhand as a distinct state is a testament to the persistent demand for statehood in the region.

In Uttarakhand, abandoning the hills has long been a common practice among those looking for better access to healthcare and education, as well as a wider range of employment opportunities. The 2011 Census revealed that Uttarakhand's overall population growth rate was 1.7%, with significant variations across the state's plains and mountainous regions. There has been an evident inclination of migration out from the state's mountainous parts as the hilly regions saw a population increase of 0.70%, significantly lower than the 2.82% growth observed in the plain districts, indicating a notable migration trend away from the hilly areas of the state.

Regrettably, the development landscape in Uttarakhand has failed to curtail the out-migration from its hilly districts, showing a recent acceleration in the trend. Most mountainous districts have experienced sluggish population growth, exemplified by a stark decline of 17,868 individuals in Almora and Pauri Garhwal between 2001 and 2011, underscoring the extent of out-migration. In parallel, rural areas in the plains, including Haridwar, Dehradun, and Udham Singh Nagar, have witnessed substantial development, leaving the hill districts comparatively underdeveloped.

It is estimated that only 10% of the land in hilly regions is irrigated due to small and dispersed land holdings making a significant portion of rural people dependent on subsistence farming or migration in search of better opportunities. The lack of development of infrastructure in the hill areas, particularly in roads, irrigation, and power, exacerbates the differences in income and standard of living between the plains and the hills.

## **II. MIGRATION- MAJOR CAUSES**

In Uttarakhand, the primary driving forces behind migration are the "push factors." According to the 2001 census, approximately 13% of the population relocated in search of improved employment prospects.

A considerable number of educated young individuals leave in pursuit of jobs. While women and older men continued farming in the villages, the majority of those migrating were young men. The population growth rate in hilly areas decreased from 18.04% in the 1981-1991 period to 12.28% in the 1991-2001 period and further dropped to 5.36% in the 2001-2011 period. In contrast, during the 1981-1991 period, the urban-plain region witnessed a population growth of 34.40%, which declined to 27.92% after the formation of the new state due to migration to Uttar Pradesh. However, it subsequently increased significantly to 30.38% in the 2001-2011 period. The overall population growth rate for the state during 2001-2011 was 18.8%. Several factors have driven this migration from Uttarakhand, including challenging rural living conditions, the impact of climate change, a high unemployment rate, the mountainous terrain, low agricultural productivity, and educational prospects. Improved infrastructure along river valleys, the establishment of institutions, and the growth of service centers have facilitated internal migration. Many migrants never returned to their communities, leading to concerns about depopulation, land abandonment, and food insecurity in rural regions.

The primary reason behind the high rate of out-migration from the hill districts is attributed to the lack of income opportunities and the limited access to quality education and healthcare facilities. Farming, which was historically the main occupation of the hill people, has become unsustainable and economically unviable due to the absence of irrigation facilities and unpredictable weather patterns. The phenomenon of out-migration in Uttarakhand has gained prominence, particularly after the year 2000, when the state was established. On a statewide level, it was observed that approximately 50.16% of the population migrated primarily for employment, with education (15.21%) being the second most significant reason. Migration for health reasons accounted for 8.83% of the out-migration. Various other factors, such as seeking improved facilities (3.74%), have also contributed to the out-migration trend in Uttarakhand. An additional 8.48% of out-migration can be attributed to unspecified factors.

## **III. CONCLUSION**

The overall growth path of Uttarakhand has been very scattered since its formation. However, this growth has created huge regional inequalities within the State. The growth process could hardly create productive employment and income opportunities in the Hill region of Uttarakhand. There is hardly any visible progress made toward developing remunerative agriculture in most of the villages in the Hill Region. Outside agriculture, employment opportunities in construction grew significantly, but local people were mostly unwilling to undertake manual work. Their access to skilled jobs in the construction sector was severely affected due to the lack of such skill training. The employment opportunities in other sectors such as trade, transport, and government services improved in the Hill Region but remained limited to a few people. Thus, a lack of remunerative livelihoods coupled with an obsession for salaried jobs has forced a large number of youths to migrate to cities in search of salaried jobs that are of relatively longer duration irrespective of earnings. The situation has become quite grim in some areas as there are hardly any people left in the villages. Such destitution needs to be reversed. A large number of people, mainly youth, have out-migrated semi-permanently and permanently. In several areas, only the old-aged people and women were left living with minimum basic amenities. Migration has led to depopulation and land abandonment in rural areas, which has severe repercussions on the farming systems. The rate of out-migration has increased mainly since 2000 and has aggravated in recent times. Unemployment is one of the major impediments to out-migration. Since the rural areas are devoid of infrastructural and institutional facilities, augmentation of employment is not possible. Further, the output from traditionally practiced subsistence cereal cultivation is not enough to carry livelihood sustainably. These factors have manifested a large out-migration of youth from the region, and if it continues, the out-migration will have severe adverse implications on the rural areas and their economy. Several steps should be taken to minimize out-migration and attract the migrants to come back to their respective villages.

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