

MIGRATION AS A DRIVER OF CHANGING HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES: IMPLICATIONS FOR HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOODS AND ADAPTATION

Rural to urban migration has significant effects on the livelihood dynamics of households, resulting in new emerging household structures within migrant communities.

WHAT WAS DONE, AND WHAT WAS NOVEL?

The paper makes key methodological and theoretical contributions to migration and adaptation literature.

1. By capturing the range of household structures seen along a rural-urban continuum in India, it calls for an expanded understanding of the 'household' to capture the realities of multi-local households.
2. It builds a case for moving away from static, gender-segregated household surveys as the sole instrument to capture the dynamism of migration.
3. Highlighting the implications of changing household structures on risk management and wellbeing, it argues for an expanded conceptualisation of 'local adaptation' that is sensitive to the 'beyond-local' flows and networks that shape household risk management behaviour.

KEY FINDINGS

The paper uses empirical evidence from a water-stressed region in India to examine how migration and commuting are changing household structures, and the implications of these changes on intra-household wellbeing and adaptive capacity. Migration and risk management studies, especially in the context of environmental change, typically examine households as male- and female-headed, and rarely unpack how migration and commuting shape intra-household dynamics and risk management strategies.

Drawing on mixed methods research in a semi-arid district in South India, this paper addresses this gap by interrogating what different household configurations mean for men and women's risk management. In particular, the paper explores how aspirational shifts, changing household configurations, and wider transitions in the social-ecological system shape adaptation and wellbeing in gendered ways.

KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The findings in this paper caution against the danger of current adaptation interventions being 'overly local'. Against an expanded understanding of households as multi-local, and drawing on translocal livelihoods, this paper argues for an expanded conceptualisation of adaptation processes as well. If we are to see migration as contributing to household wellbeing and adaptive capacity, it follows that 'local' adaptation can be broadened by placing it in a pluralistic web of interdependent "local" adaptations in other places.

